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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2004

Rebel strike at U.S. base in Mosul kills at least 24

U.S. soldiers among dead as explosion rocks crowded dining hall

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RICHMOND (VA.) TIMES-DISPATCH/AP

U.S. soldiers help a wounded comrade after an insurgent attack on a dining facility during lunchtime Tuesday at Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul. Officials said 24 people — a combination of U.S. military personnel, U.S. contractors, foreign national contractors and Iraqi army soldiers — were killed and 57 wounded.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Capsize water taxi: A water taxi that flipped over in Baltimore's Inner Harbor earlier this year in a sudden storm had too much weight aboard, according to a federal report.

Five passengers were thrown from the Seaport Taxi vessel in March, and died when it capsized in winds exceeding 50 mph.

The National Transportation Safety Board, in a report released Monday, said operators of the 36-foot Lady D followed passenger limits set by the Coast Guard, but outdated weight estimates were used.

Michael Jackson trial: A judge denied a defense bid to delay Michael Jackson's child molestation trial, saying it would be "a huge step backward" and clearing the way for the trial to begin next month as planned.

In Santa Maria, Calif., Judge Rodney S. Melville also refused to dismiss the case for what his defense lawyers had argued was "vindictive prosecution and outrageous government conduct."

Jackson attorney Robert Sanger had asked Melville to postpone the trial for three months, allowing attorneys time to sort through 14,000 pages of evidence filed by prosecutors.

The trial was scheduled to begin Jan. 31.

Lottery winner's granddaughter: The 17-year-old granddaughter of the winner of the largest U.S. lottery jackpot was found dead near her boyfriend's home, her body wrapped in a sheet and plastic.

"All I know is she OP'd and Brandon freaked out," Steve Crosier, the father of Brandi Bragg's boyfriend, Brandon, told reporters.

Bragg, who lived in the nearby town of Hurricane, was last seen alive Dec. 4. She was reported missing five days later by Jack Whittaker, who won a \$314.9 million jackpot on Christmas Day 2002 but has battled legal and other problems since then.

The cause of death was under investigation. Authorities said there were no obvious signs of violence, and they would not comment on whether drugs were involved.

Ohio voting machine investigation: Election officials in Hocking County, Ohio, watched as a technician repeated a repair he had made to a vote tallying computer, then announced they had no evidence of any sort of tampering, despite a congressman's request for an FBI probe.

Observers, including a Green Party representative who had sought a presidential recount, agreed the procedure did not alter the Election Day vote total in the county, Hocking County Prosecutor Larry Beal said.

Dick Clark's health: TV personality-producer Dick Clark will spend Christmas, and perhaps New Year's Eve, in a hospital where he's recovering from a mild stroke, his spokesman said Tuesday.

Clark, who suffered the stroke Dec. 6, is out of the intensive care unit and "doing some rehab," said publicist Paul Sheffrin.

He will remain hospitalized through Christmas, and will be watching his New Year's Eve special either from his hospital bed or at home in Malibu, Calif., Sheffrin said.

"The doctors have told him how thrilled they are with his progress," said Sheffrin, who wouldn't give any details about the impact of the stroke or discuss whether there was paralysis.

Suspected Mafia graveyard: Remains re-



Maryland arsons: A supporter of Patrick Walsh, Michael Everhart and Jeremy Parady is restrained during an altercation with a protester outside the Federal Courthouse in Greenbelt, Md., on Monday. Walsh, Everhart and Parady were in court and charged with arson in connection with the Dec. 6 fires at an upscale development in Indian Head, Md. Two more suspects were arrested Monday, but authorities say they have not found a motive for the arson that caused an estimated \$10 million in damage. Two possible motives, race and revenge, are among the theories that have emerged, an official has said.

cently discovered buried in a suspected Mafia graveyard in Queens, N.Y., were those of two mob captains who were murdered in 1981, the FBI said Monday.

An investigation by the FBI's Evidence Response Team and the city medical examiner determined the victims were Bonanno crime family captains Philip Giaccone and Dominick Trinchera, said Pasquale D'A-muro, head of the bureau's New York office.

Seattle church-abuse lawsuits: The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle has agreed to pay \$1.8 million to settle 12 claims of sexual abuse by priests, the majority involving a former pastor at several churches in the area.

Eleven of the settled cases involved the Rev. James McGreal, who was banned from the ministry and lives in a supervised church facility in Missouri.

The 12th claim involved the Rev. David Jaeger, who admitted in the mid-1990s that he inappropriately touched a 13-year-old boy at a youth camp in 1978. Jaeger is on administrative leave.

Business

AOL spam cases: Federal prosecutors and a former America Online software engineer have negotiated a tentative plea agreement over charges he stole more than 92 million e-mail addresses and sold them to Internet spammers, according to two people familiar with the case.

Jason Smathers, 34, of Harper's Ferry, W. Va., was scheduled to appear Tuesday in court. In exchange for a guilty plea by Smathers to violating the U.S. "Can Spam" law, prosecutors will recommend a fine and up to two years in prison, according to one person familiar with the agreement.

World

New Afghanistan Cabinet: President Hamid Karzai will demand that all members of his new Cabinet renounce their citi-

zenship in any other country, despite a constitutional loophole that would allow them to serve for an interim period, his spokesman said Tuesday.

Many of Afghanistan's political elite have acquired U.S. or British nationality while living abroad during more than two decades of near-constant warfare. Some have been reluctant to give up their status, earning criticism that they lack faith in Afghanistan's future.

Philippine actor's death: Tens of thousands of Filipinos on Tuesday filed past the casket of Fernando Poe Jr. on the eve of his funeral, paying last respects to the actor-turned-presidential candidate who came to symbolize the aspirations of this country's poor.

Authorities in the Philippines said security would be tight during an expected massive burial procession early Wednesday. Poe's widow, Susan Roces, asked mourners not to turn the funeral into a political event.

Poe, 65, died of a stroke last week without conceding May's presidential election. His supporters still contend they were cheated by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Athens bus hijacking: Two Albanian housepainters apologized at their arraignment Monday for seizing a Greek bus last week and taking more than two dozen passengers hostage.

Gas Rezuli and Leonard Murati, who were ordered to stand trial on charges of kidnapping and attempted murder, said they took the hostages and demanded a \$1.3 million ransom to start a business in Albania.

The men, both 24, were accused of hijacking the public bus Wednesday near Athens. The 18-hour standoff ended after police cordoned off the bus and negotiated the release of all 26 hostages on board. No one was injured.

They each face up to 25 years in prison if convicted. They were ordered to remain in custody pending trial.

Stories and photo from wire services

Correction

A story in Tuesday's editions about the rescheduling of spring break for some Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe misidentified the director of DODDS-Europe. Diana Ohman is the director.

Comics, horoscopes and
advice — every day in
Stars and Stripes



RICHMOND (VA.) TIMES-DISPATCH/AP

A hole in the roof of a tent at Forward Operating Base Marez lights the smoke moments after an attack on a dining facility Tuesday in Mosul, Iraq. U.S. officials said 24 people were killed and 57 were wounded in the attack, occurring as troops had just sat down for lunch.

Insurgents hit U.S. base in Mosul

U.S., Iraqis among
24 killed and 57
wounded in strike

BY MICHAEL McDONOUGH
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — An explosion ripped through a tent at a military base in Mosul where hundreds of U.S. soldiers had just sat down to lunch Tuesday, and officials said 24 people were killed and 57 wounded. A radical Muslim group, the Ansar al-Sunnah Army, claimed responsibility for the deadliest attack on a U.S. base in Iraq.

The dead included U.S. military personnel, U.S. contractors, foreign national contractors and Iraqi army soldiers, said Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, commander of Task Force Olympia in Mosul.

The attack came the same day that British Prime Minister Tony Blair made a surprise visit to Baghdad and described the ongoing violence in Iraq as a "battle between democracy and terror."

Lt. Col. Paul Hastings, spokesman for the task force, said 24 people died and 57 were wounded, making it the deadliest strike at a U.S. base since the war last year.

Halliburton spokeswoman Wendy Hall said seven of the dead were from its KBR subsidiary or its subcontractors. Halliburton and its subcontractors have lost 62 personnel while performing services under our contracts in the Kuwait-Iraq region, she said.

Jeremy Redmon, a reporter for the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch embedded with the troops in Mosul said the people in the tent had just sat down to eat at Forward Operating Base Marez.

'I can't hear,' one soldier cried

Editor's note: Jeremy Redmon, a Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch reporter embedded with U.S. troops, was at Forward Operating Base Marez when it came under attack.

BY JEREMY REDMON

Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq — It was a brilliant, sunny day with blue skies and warmer than usual weather in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

Hundreds of U.S. soldiers had just sat down for lunch in their giant chow hall tent. It was about noon Tuesday when insurgents hit their tent with a suspected rocket attack, killing at least 24 people, including two soldiers from the Richmond-based 276th Engineer Battalion. Fifty-seven people were reported wounded, civilians may have been among them.

The force of the explosions knocked soldiers off their feet and out of their seats. A fireball enveloped the top of the tent, and shrapnel sprayed into the men.

He reported 64 were wounded, and civilians may have been among them, he said.

Officials could not break down the toll of dead or wounded among the groups. Reports also differed as to the cause of the blast at the camp, which is based outside the predominantly Sunni Muslim city about 220 miles north of Baghdad.

The base, also known as the al-Ghazlani military camp, is used by both U.S. troops and the interim Iraqi government's security forces.

Although military officials initially said rockets or mortar rounds struck the camp, Hastings said it was still under investigation.

"We do not know if it was a mortar or a place explosive," he said,

Amid the screaming and thick smoke that followed, quick-thinking soldiers turned their lunch tables upside down, placed the wounded on them and gently carried them into the parking lot.

Medics rushed into the tent and hustled the rest of the wounded out on stretchers. Scores of troops crammed into concrete bomb shelters outside.

Others wobbled around the tent and collapsed, dazed by the blast.

"I can't hear! I can't hear!" one female soldier cried as a friend hugged her.

Near the front entrance to the chow hall, troops tended a soldier with a gaping head wound. Within minutes, they zipped him into a black body bag. Three more bodies were in the parking lot.

Soldiers scrambled back into the hall to check for more wounded.

The explosions blew out a huge hole in the roof of the tent.

Puddles of bright red blood, lunch trays and overturned tables and chairs covered the floor.

SEE MAREZ ON PAGE 4

neered to avoid ground fire from insurgents.

Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city, was relatively peaceful in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime last year. But insurgent attacks in the largely Sunni Arab area have increased dramatically in the past year and particularly since the U.S.-led military operation in November to retake the restive city of Fallujah from militants.

Earlier in the day, hundreds of students demonstrated in the center of the city, demanding that U.S. troops cease breaking into homes and mosques there.

Also Tuesday, Iraqi security forces repelled another attack by insurgents trying to seize a police station in the center of the city, the U.S. military said.

SEE MOSUL ON PAGE 4

Blast in Mosul

An explosion at a U.S. base in the northern city of Mosul on Tuesday caused multiple casualties.



SOURCE: ESR

Statement by Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, commander of Task Force Olympia in Mosul, Iraq:

"There has been an incident at one of our bases in southwest Mosul. There was a single large explosion in a dining facility. We don't yet know the source of that explosion. The investigation is ongoing by explosives experts to determine ... the source.

"The attack today had a very negative effect against multinational forces and our Iraqi partners here in Mosul.

"So far, more than 20 have been killed, and more than 60 wounded. The killed include U.S. military personnel, U.S. contractors, foreign national contractors and Iraqi Army. The wounded also came from those areas, too.

"We are in the process now of making notifications to the families and units of those who were killed or wounded in today's tragic attack.

"Our hearts go out to the families and our fellow soldiers who lost comrades in arms today, who lost husbands and fathers and brothers, both Americans and Iraqis. It is, indeed, a very, very sad day.

"But I would also say, in their typical magnificent manner, U.S. soldiers today responded to that attack just as we would have expected them to: with unselfish caring for one another. It was a heartwarming experience to see wounded soldiers caring for those more severely wounded.

"And in the chaos that followed that attack, there was no differentiation by nationalities, whether one wore a uniform or civilian clothes, they were all brothers in arms taking care of one another.

"And I think that's something that all Americans, and indeed all Iraqis, can be very proud of.

"I ask you on this sad day that you keep us in your thoughts, your hearts and your prayers. There are those who lost many dear friends today. It's a sad day in Mosul.

"But as they always do, soldiers will come back from that, and they will do what they can to best take care of those who have fallen today and that is to see this very important mission through to successful completion.

"That's what we owe you, the American people, and that's what we owe the people of Iraq. And that is exactly what we shall do.

"Thank you, May God bless America, and may God preserve peace in Iraq."



RICHMOND (VA.) TIMES-DISPATCH/AP

U.S. Army Chaplain Eddie Barnett, far right, says a prayer with members of the 276th Engineer Battalion after an apparent mortar attack Tuesday on Forward Operating Base Maraz in Mosul, Iraq.

Mosul: Blair in Iraq amid deadly attack

MOSUL, FROM PAGE 3

During his visit, Blair held talks with Allawi and Iraqi election officials, whom he called heroes for carrying out their work despite attacks. Three members of Iraq's election commission were dragged from a car and killed this week in Baghdad.

"I said to them that I thought they were the heroes of the new Iraq that's being created, because here are people who are risking their lives every day to make sure that the people of Iraq get a chance to decide their own destiny," Blair said at a joint news conference with Allawi.

Blair, who has said a political price for going to war in Iraq, defended the role of Britain's 8,000 troops by referring to terrorism. "If we defeat it here, we deal it a blow worldwide," he said.

"If Iraq is a stable and democratic country, that is good for the Middle East, and what is good for the Middle East is actually good for the world, including Britain."

Blair, whose trip to Iraq hadn't been disclosed for security reasons, urged Iraqis to back next month's elections.

Allawi said his government was committed to holding the elections as scheduled, despite calls for their postponement owing to the violence.

"We have always expected that the violence would increase as we

approach the elections," Allawi said. "We now are on the verge, for the first time in history, of having democracy in action in this country."

It was Blair's first visit to Baghdad and his third to Iraq since the dictator Saddam Hussein was toppled April 2003. Blair visited British troops stationed around the southern Iraqi city of Basra in mid-2003 and in January. Blair flew to Basra later Tuesday.

In other violence Tuesday, a U.S. jet bombed a suspected insurgent target west of Baghdad. Hamdi Al-Alosi, a doctor in a hospital in the city of Hit, said four people were killed and seven injured in the strike. He said the attack damaged several cars and two buildings. A U.S. military spokesman could not confirm the casualties.

Elsewhere, five American soldiers and an Iraqi civilian were traveling in what by a car bomb near Hawija, 150 miles north of Baghdad, the U.S. military said.

In northern Iraq, insurgents set ablaze a major pipeline used to ship oil to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, a principal export route for Iraqi oil, an official with the North Oil CO. said.

John Lumpkin and Slobodan Lekic of The Associated Press contributed to this story in Washington and Baghdad, respectively.

Balad, medical teams act fast to transport wounded

BY RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — Getting wounded troops back to the States quickly and safely is a relatively new military philosophy.

It requires a slew of highly trained doctors, nurses, medics and other personnel to safeguard patients against the hazards of travel, while critically injured. But with those people on hand, seriously wounded troops in Iraq may find themselves getting treated on American soil within 48 hours.

The old way, said Air Force Dr. (Capt.) Phillip Mason, was to build a large field hospital and let patients recuperate for several days before shipping them out.

"The new doctrine is, patients that are critically injured, or injured at all, get them home," said Mason, a physician with a Critical Care Air Transport Team at Balad, part of the 379th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.

Moving patients out quickly to permanent facilities like Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany or Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., provides a host of advantages, said Capt. James Polk, a critical care team nurse. Patients can recover in a much cleaner environment, they can reunite with family faster and by moving, hospital staff in Iraq can devote more time to the patients still in the war zone.

At Balad, all patients who require evacuation usually are on a flight within 48 hours, winging their way to Landstuhl on scheduled or arranged flights.

Air evacuation requires two types of medical teams to monitor patients during a flight: The aeromedical evacuation team, or AE, consisting of a flight nurse and two medical technicians, is responsible for patients with less than serious injuries. A critical air transport team, or CATT, tends to patients with more serious needs and includes an intensive care nurse, a respiratory therapist and a physician.

Because flying can affect a patient's condition, all medical personnel on board must be prepared for a sudden change in vital signs or condition.

The in-flight medics must determine if the changes are simply caused by flying or something more serious, said Tech. Sgt. Diego Santos, 34, an aeromedical technician in Balad, who is an Air National Guard member from Charlotte, N.C., where he is supervisor for a manufacturing company.

"They can come up short of breath, have prob-

lems with their heart," said Capt. Chris Crawford, 44, a flight nurse from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, part of an aeromedical evacuation team in Iraq.

Mason, 31, who is from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, said, "It's just like taking you from sea level to Denver, 5,000 feet above sea level."

The noise of the aircraft can cause problems for the medics, as well.

"You can't hear the alarm [on the medical equipment] as easily," said Polk, 35, who is also from Lackland.

That means they must anticipate changes and keep close watch for any problems.

After AE teams prepare and aircraft for the flight, patients are taken from the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility and put on board.

"That takes coordination," she said of organizing patient movement. "It's intense when you're picking up the patients."

AE teams may have more than two dozen patients in their care on one flight. They are responsible for the patients from the moment they are put on a plane in Balad until they are removed at Ramstein, where they are taken to the Landstuhl hospital.

The critical care teams usually have one patient each because of the severity of the patients' conditions.

"We take them from the [intensive care unit] here to the ICU there," said Mason. "Because their charges are in less serious condition, the AE teams often get to know them during the flight."

Crawford said, "Troops that I've brought out are in very good spirits. They compare wounds. They say [to one another], 'Where did you get shot?'"

Polk said the CATT patients are different.

"You remember names. You have five hours with them," he said. "They never remember us. They're on a ventilator or they're medicated."

If the patients don't remember the trip, he said, "I know I've done my job."

Nonetheless, this is precious cargo. The medics aren't the only ones who help patients on their journey. Volunteers carry most of the stretchers onto the aircraft. Flight line workers come by to help.

Even the pilots have come to the back of the aircraft to lend a hand.

Still, it is the patients who are the ones worthy of admiration.

"These guys inspire me to be a better nurse," said Crawford.

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensenr@mail.strips.esd.mil

Marez: 'Almost made it' without loss

MAREZ, FROM PAGE 3

Sgt. Evan Byler, of the 276th, stashed himself on one of the concrete bomb shelters. He was eating chicken tenders and macaroni when the bomb hit. The blast knocked him out of his chair. When the smoke cleared, Byler took off his shirt and wrapped it around a seriously wounded soldier.

Byler held the bloody shirt so his hand, not quite sure what to do with it.

"It's not the first close call I have had here," said Byler, a Fauquier County, Va., resident who survived a blast from an improvised explosive device while riding in a vehicle earlier this year.

Byler started walking back to his base when he spotted a soldier collapse from shock on the side of the road. Byler and Lt. Shawn Ott, also of the 276th, put the grieving soldier on a passing pickup truck.

The 276th, with about 500 troops, had made it a year without losing a soldier and is preparing to return home in about a month. "We almost made it. We almost made it to the end without getting somebody killed," Ott said.

At least two other soldiers with the 276th were injured, but it was not clear how serious their wounds are.

Maj. James Zollar, the unit's acting commander, spoke to

more than a dozen of his officers in a voice thick with emotion. He urged them to keep their troops focused on their missions.

"This is a tragic, tragic thing for us, but we still have missions," he told them. "It's us, the leaders, who have to pull them together."

Zollar eventually turned the condolence meeting over to Chaplain Eddie Barnett. He led the group in prayer.

"Help us now, God, in this time of this very tragic circumstance," Barnett said. "We pray for your healing upon our wounded soldiers."

With heads hung low, the soldiers trudged outside. He had work to do.

The Associated Press

As of Monday, at least 1,304 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,021 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is four higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Monday.

The British military has reported 75 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia,

three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,166 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 91 U.S. civilians, resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No new deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ No new identifications reported.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

Gitmo interrogators may have posed as FBI

Pentagon investigates ACLU claims

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is investigating new allegations by a civil liberties group that military interrogators at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay posed as FBI agents while using abusive techniques to question detainees.

The American Civil Liberties Union released e-mails that showed FBI officials disapproved of the practice and suggested the military interrogators posed as FBI agents in part to take advantage of the rapport the FBI had established with some detainees at the prison.

The e-mails, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, also describe some harsh interrogation techniques and a suggestion they were approved by President Bush — a charge the White House vigorously denied.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said posing as FBI agents is not on a list of interrogation methods approved by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

The White House denied a suggestion in an FBI e-mail dated May 22 that Bush personally signed off on certain interrogation techniques in an executive order. The FBI declined comment.

The military operation at Guantanamo Bay has come under increased scrutiny as former prisoners have alleged they were tortured. The Pentagon maintains it runs a humane operation there, and says all allegations of abuse are investigated.

The ACLU's latest disclosures primarily constitute e-mails between FBI officials whose names the government removed before releasing them. In several, the writers describe and criticize various interrogation techniques they say they witnessed at Guantanamo.

In one of the e-mails message, dated from August, the writer reports more than one witnessing prisoners chained to the floor in a fetal position, with no food or water. They had often soiled themselves.

On one occasion, the temperature in a room was lowered so much the barefooted detainee shivered. In another, the room was so hot the detainee had pulled out some of his hair before passing out.

In one e-mail, the writer described seeing a "detainee sitting on the floor of the interview room with an Israeli flag draped around him, loud music being played and a strobe light flashing."

Another Guantanamo prisoner has, in a court petition, described detainees wrapped in Israeli flags, among other allegations. At the time, a Guantanamo Bay spokesman denied his statements.

While military interrogators are performing much of the questioning at Guantanamo, the FBI and CIA also have operations there.

Anthony Romero, executive director of the ACLU, says the FBI documents continue to show the U.S. government was "tor-

Review finds second Gitmo prisoner wrongly classified

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A military review has found a second prisoner at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay wrongly classified as an enemy combatant, and he will be released soon to his home country, the Navy's top civilian said Monday.

Of the roughly 200 detainees already released, at least a dozen have returned to the battlefield, Navy Secretary Gordon England said.

Asked about Guantanamo at a news conference Monday, Bush said, "You've got to understand the dilemma we're in. These are people that got scooped up off a battlefield attempting to kill U.S. troops. And I want to make sure, before they're released, that they don't come back to kill again."

The newest prisoner to face release would be the second freed under a military process instituted after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last summer that prisoners at Guantanamo could challenge

their detentions through the U.S. court system.

To bolster its case for each of the prisoners against any such challenge, the Pentagon set up tribunals to review circumstances of each man's capture to determine whether they are properly held.

England refused to identify the prisoner to be released by name or nationality, and the circumstances of his capture were not immediately available. The State Department has been notified of the decision and will arrange his return home.

More than 300 additional cases are still being reviewed.

Separately Monday, a federal judge in New York said he would deny a government request to delay a review of whether certain CIA internal files related to Iraq should be made public.

Judge Alvin Hellerstein's comments marked a victory for the ACLU and other groups seeking information about the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo and in Iraq.

turing individuals in some instances" and demonstrates a major rift between FBI agents and the military over proper interrogation techniques.

"There was real concern within our law enforcement community about whether we are torturing individuals," Romero said.

Seasons Greetings, Sgt. Delbert Jensen

Your friends and co-workers at Noramco want to wish you a Happy Holiday!



Navy SEAL acquitted of abusing prisoner

2nd SEAL gets probation in different case

BY SETH HETTENA
The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A Navy SEAL has been acquitted of charges that he beat a handcuffed and hooded terror suspect who later died, while a second commando received probation for assaulting another prisoner, attorneys for the men said.

The first SEAL, a first-class petty officer, was found not guilty of assault and dereliction of duty Thursday in a nonjudicial proceeding known as a captain's mast, his attorney, Jeremiah Sullivan, said Monday.

The other commando, a second-class petty officer, was sentenced Friday of assault and received six months probation, said his attorney, Milt Silverman.

Both hearings, closed to the public, were held before SEAL Capt. James O'Connell at Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado, outside San Diego.

The Navy has not released the names of the accused SEALs and a Navy spokesman said privacy laws prevented him from commenting. The two were members of SEAL Team Seven, based in Coronado, and were involved in joint CIA-special forces missions.

The first SEAL was accused of

punching and kicking prisoner Manadel al-Jamadi and appearing in a photo in which the hooded and handcuffed detainee was allegedly humiliated.

Al-Jamadi, a suspect in the bombing of a Red Cross facility, was captured during a CIA-special forces mission in November 2003 and died a short time later in Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad.

The second SEAL was accused of trying to subdue a detainee during a CIA investigation by putting him in a headlock. The detainee was suspected of supplying explosives and weapons to insurgents attacking U.S. troops in Iraq.

The SEAL was cleared of charges of appearing in a photo taken in December 2003 in which another hooded and handcuffed terror suspect was allegedly humiliated.

Ten of the Navy's 2,400 SEALs are facing criminal charges following an investigation into allegations of detainee abuse, said Lt. Taylor Clark, a spokesman for the SEALs.

Six SEALs have received nonjudicial punishment at captain's mast proceedings. Two others are facing special courts-martial and two are awaiting Article 32 hearings, the military equivalent of a civilian grand jury.

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Polls: Americans support staying in Iraq

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Despite growing doubts, most Americans still support keeping U.S. military troops in Iraq until the country is stabilized, according to polls released Monday.

More than half — 56 percent — say the United States should keep troops in Iraq until it is stable, according to a poll by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Forty percent said troops should be brought home as soon as possible.

That's about the same level of support that Pew has found all year for keeping troops in Iraq until it's stabilized. An ABC News-Washington Post poll got essentially

“Even for critics of the decision to go to war, pulling out is seen as further increasing risks of terrorism and raising the threat to the United States.”

Andrew Kohut

Pew Research Center director

the same results.

“Even for critics of the decision to go to war, pulling out is seen as further increasing the risks of terrorism and raising the threat to the United States,” said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center.

Four in 10 said they approve of the way the United States has handled the situation

in Iraq, while almost six in 10 disapprove, according to a CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll. A year ago, almost two-thirds approved of the way Iraq was being handled.

Half in the Gallup poll say the situation is worse than a year ago, while 20 percent say it's better. People were evenly divided on whether more troops should be sent to

Iraq to help with upcoming elections.

About four in 10, 42 percent, in the ABC News-Washington Post poll said they approve of Bush's handling of Iraq, while 57 percent disapprove. Six in 10 said the elections scheduled for late January should be held on schedule, even though most say Iraq is not ready for the elections to be held.

The Pew poll of 2,000 adults was taken Dec. 1-16 and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points, larger for subgroups. The Gallup poll of 1,002 adults was taken Dec. 17-19 and the ABC-Post poll of 1,004 adults was taken Dec. 16-19.

Both the Gallup and ABC polls have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.



JEREMIAH JOHNSON/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Soldiers of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division Stryker Brigade Combat Team run past a Stryker vehicle during Operation Indy in Mosul, Iraq, on Nov. 11.

Officials look to give Stryker a face lift

By LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Army officials learned some important lessons when its first Stryker Brigade Combat Team deployed to Iraq this fall that are helping the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Wainwright, Alaska, due to go into the country next summer.

Soldiers have suggested small improvements that have already been made, such as new seat belts and interior hand-holds.

But there are larger issues still at stake, such as shaving the vehicle's weight, its potential to rollover and trap soldiers, and whether the current "cage" armor is effective, critics say.

Army leaders recently attempted to change such impressions by holding a media video teleconference with a dozen Stryker commanders from four locations.

Lt. Col. Steven Townsend, commander of the 3rd Brigade, 2 Infantry Division who spoke from Fort Lewis, Wash., called the Stryker "a heck of a vehicle."

"Soldiers know this vehicle is not perfect, they do know and believe it's the best vehicle available and they have it to use today," Townsend, whose was the first Stryker Bri-

gade Combat Team to deploy to Iraq, in October 2003, said during the roundtable.

Commanders at the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, which is due to go into the country next summer, are busy using lessons learned from the first Stryker brigade in Iraq, brigade commander Col. Michael Shields said during the roundtable.

The lessons learned from their predecessors "are really helping," Shields said. Many of the lessons are simple, such as the need for additional handholds welded inside the Stryker.

Commanders in Iraq also realized that the original seat belts were not strong enough to accommodate a soldier wearing the new individual body armor and other bulky items on his person.

With the seat belts uncomfortably tight, soldiers simply were not strapping in while the vehicle was moving, commanders said, increasing the danger during collisions, explosions or rollovers.

With new seat belts, the problem has been solved, Fuller said.

Commanders in Iraq also determined that the Stryker's "bird cage" slatted armor was not making the common armored vehicle issue of rollovers, even worse.

The armor, designed to defeat rocket propelled grenades, acts like a baseball catcher's mask: the explosives bounce off or do damage to the armor, not the vehicle.

The cage armor also is sufficiently effective to withstand most improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, and RPGs, another question raised by critics in the past, Army leaders said.

Lt. Col. Gordie Flowers, commander of 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, said during his year in Iraq, more than 50 percent of his Strykers were hit with rocket propelled grenades and IEDs, "the No. 1 and No. 2 weapons used against us," with no resulting fatalities.

The slat armor may be effective, but at 4,500 pounds, it does unquestionably and significantly add to the Stryker's basic 19-ton weight.

And weight remains a serious issue for the Stryker brigade, which Army planners originally said would have the capability of deployment by C-130 transport aircraft, anywhere in the world within 96 hours.

"The C-130 transportability remains 'an important metric, and we'll continue to pursue it,'" Fuller said. "We're working to reduce the [Stryker's] weight."

E-mail: Lisa.Burgess@stripes.osd.mil

Financial company flooded by e-mails

By LEO SHANE III
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lawyers handling refunds in the First Command Financial Planning case have received hundreds of e-mails in the past week regarding the payouts, mainly from troops serving overseas.

Wayne M. Secore, the attorney administering the restitution program, said his staff is working to respond to those soldiers and other affected by the case as quickly as possible. But troops have until March 15 to receive their losses, which he said leaves plenty of time for officials to handle the requests. In addition, that deadline can be extended if troops can't file in time because of unusual hardship, such as serving in a combat zone, he said.

Last week, First Command agreed to refund about \$4 million to certain customers who bought mutual funds from the firm between 1999 and this year. The company mostly costs to military personnel and securities investigators accused them of misleading investors about service charges in their systematic investment plans. The company's lawyers announced last week. First Command's other financial services — such as life insurance and banking programs — were not affected by the settlement.

The refunds will be available only to consumers who bought and sold their systematic investment plans between 1999 and this year, Secore said. Eligible individuals should be receiving letters detailing how to obtain the payouts in the next few weeks.

Secore said troops with additional questions can contact him at a secure e-mail address.

Investors who still hold their First Command plans may be eligible for arbitration to recover certain service fees. The claims will be handled through the National Association of Securities Dealers, the brokerage industry's self-police organization.

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2 French reporters freed after 4 months in Iraq

BY JAMEY KEATAN

The Associated Press

PARIS — Two French reporters held hostage for four months in Iraq were released Tuesday and handed over to French authorities.

"I have a profound joy in announcing to you that Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot have just been freed by the Islamic Army," Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin told the Senate, which erupted with applause.

Chesnot's brother, Thierry, said the two

men were in good health. "It's the best Christmas present we could get," he said of the release.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Herve Ladouss said the two men were expected in France on Wednesday. They were handed over to French authorities in the Iraqi capital, he said.

"Our joy will be complete when they will be in full security on our national soil," Raffarin told the Senate. He paid homage "to the courage of these two men who suffered these long months in difficult conditions" and said their freedom was the "re-

sult of constant, difficult and discrete work."

The reporters' fate had gripped France. Some newspapers carried daily columns counting their days of captivity. Celebrities like actresses Catherine Deneuve and Juliette Binoche delivered daily appeals on radio to remind listeners about the hostage crisis.

Grunt photos of the men were hung from Paris' City Hall.

Chesnot and Malbrunot were abducted Aug. 20 along with their Syrian driver on the road to Najaf, a city south of Baghdad.

The driver, Mohammed al-Joundi, was found safe by U.S. Marines during an offensive in Fallujah in November. He said he had been separated from the reporters for about a month.

The Islamic Army in Iraq claimed responsibility for the journalists' abduction and demanded that France revoke a law banning Islamic head scarves and other religious apparel from schools.

The reporters were among more than 170 foreign hostages kidnapped in Iraq. More than 30 of the hostages have been killed.

Coffee in a can that heats itself to hit shelves

BY PATRICK DICKSON

Stars and Stripes

Workers in the United States often see their morning commute as a battle. Soon they'll have technology similar to what the military is using to aid in the fight.

USA Today reported in its Monday editions that beginning Jan. 2, consumers can buy a 10-ounce container of Wolfgang Puck gourmet latte at the store and heat it by pressing a button, without using electricity or appliances.

How does the can do it? A single step mixes calcium oxide (quicklime) and water. It heats the coffee to 145 degrees in six minutes — and stays hot for 30 minutes.

It's much like a technology being tested by Natick Soldier Systems for inclusion in Meals-Ready-To-Eat. The "hot beverage bag," which is to be fielded in 2005.

The military's version is less bulky, is disposable and carries no "flame signature," that is, cannot be detected by an enemy.

Puck is the owner of Los Angeles eateries Spago and Chinois. He has licensed his name to WP Beverage Partners, a beverage firm. WP has linked up

with OnTech, a technology specialist, that designed the heating process.

Nestlé has tested a similar technology with Nescafé in Europe, and smaller companies have tested it in Asia.

"We investigated that technology 15 years ago," said Daine Wood, a scientist with the Combat Feeding Directorate in Natick, Mass. "They used it for sake (an alcoholic beverage) in Asia. Commuters got it from a vending machine on the train and had a drink on the way home."

Retail grocer Kroger is so convinced the product will be a hit, it will offer the cans in its 2,530 stores — and negotiated a deal to be the only seller until mid-February.

"There's nothing like it on the market," says John Spalding, who oversees all coffee sales at Kroger, told USA Today.

The Defense Commissary Agency could not say whether they would try to carry the item.

Army and Air Force Exchange Service spokesman Judd Anstey said AEFES is in the process of contacting the vendor to see what the plans are for selling to other retailers.

The Puck coffee will retail for about \$2.25.

E-mail Patrick Dickson at: dicksonp@starsandstripes.odm.mil

Saddam, lieutenants promised fair trials

BY DUSAN STOJANOVIC

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A special Iraqi tribunal investigating Saddam Hussein and his 11 associates on Tuesday promised free and fair trials for the former regime members, rejecting accusations that the proceeding so far have not been transparent.

"The Iraqi special tribunal wants to ensure that it is an Iraqi independent court and that it has its integrity, neutrality and transparency," the tribunal said in a statement received by The Associated Press.

"The trial process [will] serve the truth and achieve justice for Iraqi people," it added.

Human rights advocates and lawyers say the tribunal's closed-door legal proceedings against Saddam's ousted regime and the secrecy leading up to the investigative hearings that began late last week threaten to undermine the legitimacy of the trial process.

Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi surprised many by announcing the trials of several of Saddam's former regime members would begin sooner than had been expected, although no date ever was set. Then, a judge made similarly unexpected news — announcing without notice last Saturday that two high-profile defendants already had been interrogated.

Ali Hassan al-Majid, better known as "Chemical Ali" for his role in poison gas attacks against the Kurdish minority, and former Defense Minister Gen. Sultan Hashim Ahmad appeared Saturday at a preliminary hearing by investigative Judge Raed al-Juburi.

"The investigation has been done in the presence of an Iraqi [lawyer] who has been chosen by the accused themselves," the tribunal said. "The accused were very cooperative during the investigation session and they may appear again according to the investigation needs."

Access to slain Marine's e-mail account sought

WIXOM, Mich. — The family of a Marine killed in Iraq is pleading with Internet giant Yahoo! for access to his e-mail account, which the company says is off-limits under its privacy policy.

Lance Cpl. Justin M. Ellsworth, 20, was killed by a roadside bomb on Nov. 13 during a foot patrol in Al Anbar province. The family wants the complete e-mail file that Justin maintained, including notes to and from others.

But without the account's password, the request has been repeatedly denied. In addition, Yahoo! policy calls for erasing all accounts that are inactive for 90 days. Yahoo! also maintains that all users agree at sign-up that rights to a member's ID or contents within an account terminate upon death.

"While we sympathize with any grieving family, Yahoo! accounts and any contents therein are nontransferable" even after death, said Karen Mahon, a Yahoo! spokeswoman.

Berlusconi foresees phased troop withdrawal

ROME — Premier Silvio Berlusconi said Tuesday that Italy would discuss a phased withdrawal of its troops from Iraq with the Iraqi government that is formed after January elections in that country, Italian news media reported.

Berlusconi insisted "Italian troops will stay in Iraq for as long as needed" — reaffirming a long-standing government position.

The Italian troops' withdrawal from Iraq "in stages can certainly be imagined and maybe can even be pinned down precisely with dates as soon as the new (Iraqi) government is in place," Berlusconi said, speaking from Sicily, according to the Apcom news agency and other reports. "There are no dates because we'll set them with the upcoming Iraqi government," Berlusconi was quoted as saying by Apcom. He pointed out that the new Iraqi government will have to engage in the formation of police and military forces.

Italy sent about 3,000 troops — the U.S.-led coalition's third largest contingent — to help rebuild the country after the April 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein.

From The Associated Press

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IN THE WORLD



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder talk Tuesday on an InterCity Express high speed train on their way to Göttingen in the northern German village of Schleswig.

Announcement of train deal caps Putin, Schroeder talks

BY TONY CZUCZKA
The Associated Press

SCHLESWIG, Germany — German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a \$2 billion deal Tuesday to bring German high-speed trains to Russia's national railway.

The agreement highlighted Germany's push to expand business with Russia.

Schröder was intent on turning the meeting with Putin into a success, despite recent tensions between Moscow and the West over the Ukrainian vote and Sunday's auction of Yukos' Yuganskneftegaz unit to a previously unknown company.

"Trade between Germany and Russia is developing very dynamically," Schröder said. "Russia is an enormously important market in which German companies must be present."

Under the train deal, Germany's Siemens AG will

provide Russia with 60 InterCity Express trains, initially to run between Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The trains will be partially built in Russia, and the agreement includes an option for 90 more trains, Siemens chief executive Heinrich von Pierer said.

Schröder gave Putin a firsthand look at the trains Tuesday, taking him on a 70-mile trip from Hamburg to the northern town of Schleswig for the final stop in two days of official German-Russian talks.

Schröder and Putin met at a 16th-century castle near the Danish border where Czar Peter the Great once stayed by during a military campaign.

Like other recent meetings between German and Russian leaders, Putin's visit was designed to show that ties between him and Schröder extend beyond formalities to friendship.

Schröder and his wife, Doris Schröder-Koepf, who adopted a 3-year-old Russian girl this summer, invited Putin to their private home in Hanover afterward before the Russian leader's departure planned for late Tuesday.

Nations agree to united security in Mediterranean

BY JAMEY KEATEN
The Associated Press

PARIS — Defense ministers and leading military officials from 10 European and North African nations agreed Tuesday to step up security cooperation in the Mediterranean basin, choosing to focus first on improving maritime surveillance.

It was the first time that the so-called "5 plus 5" group of nations took on issues like curbing the flow of drugs and illegal immigrants toward Europe, fighting terrorism and joining forces to brace for natural disasters in the region.

"We must face jointly a certain number of challenges — the fight against terrorism, against the flow of various traffic and against ecological catastrophes," Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie of France said at a joint news conference after the two-hour meeting.

The initiatives, to begin next spring, are to focus first on maritime surveillance and how military assets can boost their roles in air-sea and natural disaster response, the group said in a joint statement.

The 10 nations plan to carry out joint military exercises to prepare for oil spills at sea, exchange experts' views on maritime surveillance and add a military role to border controls.

The ministers said delegations of military experts from the region would meet twice to oversee cooperation, and the ministers are to meet annually to check up on the efforts.

The group, composed of five North African nations and five European nations on the southern rim of the Mediterranean, was set up in 1990 as a means of holding an "informal dialogue" on concerns considered vital to the region.

Foreign ministers of the group met in Algeria last month, tackling issues such as illegal immigration and terrorism.

The forum is one of several that aims to bridge the gap between Europe and its neighbors on the other side of the Mediterranean. It aims to contribute to the security and economic integration of the sometimes volatile region and push forward a larger process of cooperation between Europe and its neighbors to the south.

The "5 plus 5" group is made up of France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Malta on the European side and Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania and Libya, all North African nations.

The group was stalled for years, partly because of internal turmoil in Algeria, where violence from an Islamic insurgency left an estimated 120,000 dead, and partly because of sanctions on Libya.

Settlers ignite uproar by comparing Gaza pullout to Holocaust

BY JOSEF FEDERMAN
The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Some Jewish settlers said Tuesday that they will be wearing orange Star of David patches — similar to those the Nazis forced Jews to pin to their lapels — in an escalation of protests against a planned Gaza withdrawal.

The campaign stirred an uproar in Israel, which gave refuge to large numbers of Holocaust survivors after World War II. About 250,000 survivors still live in Israel, and mention of the Nazi genocide in a public forum remains an extremely sensitive subject.

Settler activists in Gaza said they would distribute the orange stars this weekend, although a handful of Gaza residents displayed the badges on Tuesday.

"We want to shock the nation," Miriam Freiman, a 67-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives in the Neve Dekalim settlement in Gaza.

They succeeded quickly, touching a raw nerve. Images of a Gaza woman wearing the star on her

lapel ran on the front page of an Israeli newspaper, and radio shows discussed the settler campaign nonstop.

Former Israeli Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau denounced the initiative. "Spare us this return to the nightmares of the past and leave the Holocaust in its proper place," he said. "The deliberate murder of six million Jews is such a sacred and significant thing that it cannot be compared with absolutely anything else in the world." Lau is a Holocaust survivor.

The official Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial center urged the settlers to refrain from using the stars. The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a human rights group that focuses on Holocaust issues, accused the settlers of cheapening the memory of Holocaust victims.

"The Nazi term 'resettlement' was to take Jews from their homes to be mass murdered. They're trying to create imagery that this is the same resettlement," said Efraim Zuroff, head of the Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office, who himself lives in a West Bank settlement. "We're not



Supporters of the Israeli settler movement join arms Monday as they sing following a news conference in Jerusalem. Israeli settler leaders on Monday backed a call to resist the planned evacuation of settlements in the Gaza Strip, comparing it to the Holocaust.

headed to Auschwitz, with all due respect."

Under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan, Israel will withdraw from Gaza and a small part of the West Bank next year. The plan will uproot about 8,800 settlers.

After spearheading the settlement movement for decades, Sharon says the continued occupation of Gaza is untenable and that the pullout will improve Israel's security. But Gaza settlers accuse Sharon of caving in to violence.

Arafat successor

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Marking the end of mourning for Yasser Arafat, his emerging successor said Tuesday that he remains committed to a peace deal with Israel that would produce a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Mahmoud Abbas spoke at Arafat's old headquarters, to which the Palestinian leader was confined for nearly three years until just days before Nov. 11 death at a Paris hospital. Tuesday marked the end of the 40-day Muslim mourning period for Arafat.

Abbas, the PLO chief, is the front-runner in Jan. 1 elections to replace Arafat as Palestinian Authority president, which would seal his status as Arafat's successor.

"We are standing here today to reiterate to the world that we are committed to the choice of just peace, to achieve the rights of our people," Abbas said.

From The Associated Press

New Potter book coming

LONDON — The sixth novel in J.K. Rowling's blockbuster Harry Potter series, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," will go on sale in Britain and the United States on July 16, publishers said Tuesday.

"We are delighted to announce the publication date," which also will take place in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, said the joint announcement by Nigel Newton, the chief executive of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc in England, and Barbara Marcus, the president of Scholastic Children's Books in the United States.

Bloomsbury shares surged 7 percent to a new all-time high of \$5.69, Shares of Harry Potter have provided the company with a significant boost in the past, although in September it said the absence of a new Rowling release this year had held back its annual rise in profits to 4.5 percent at \$7.16 million.

Shares of Scholastic Corp. advanced \$1.27, or 3.5 percent, to \$37.20 on the Nasdaq Stock Market — within striking range of its 52-week high of \$37.24.

Rowling, 39, noted that while she is pregnant with her third child, she has had the time "needed to tinker with the manuscript to my satisfaction and I am as happy as I have ever been with the result. I only hope you feel it was worth the wait when you finally read it."

Twins swap for escape

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Brotherly love was put to the test this week after two 18-year-old identical twins swapped their clothing and traded places so that one could escape jail.

The inmate, serving a 10-month sentence for assault and robbery, walked out of the Kronoberg jail, located in the same building that houses the headquarters for Stockholm's police department, undetected on Monday after a visit by his twin brother. The two siblings, neither of whom were named, managed to switch their outfits without anyone noticing.

After visiting hours ended, the inmate walked out, pretending to be his brother. Faced with the prospect of spending the night in jail, his brother admitted the ruse to prison guards.

"We knew there was a certain risk of a mix up, so we took some measures," said Lars-Ake Petersson, the jail warden. "But this was apparently not enough. They managed to dupe us."

The visiting brother was questioned, released, but could face charges of aiding in a prison escape.

His brother: Police said he was still on the run.

From The Associated Press



Pope John Paul II exchanges a Christmas greeting Tuesday at the Vatican with members of the Roman Curia.

EBay exec gets bail in flap over teen sex video

BY RAJESH MAHAAPATRA

The Associated Press

NEW DELHI — The Delhi High Court on Tuesday granted bail to an American citizen, the head of eBay's Indian subsidiary, who was jailed because of the online auction of a sex video involving teenagers.

Avnish Bajaj, the CEO of Bazaar.com — India's most popular shopping portal, now owned by California-based eBay Inc. — was arrested Friday following the sale of images showing classmates at a New Delhi high school engaged in oral sex. His arrest drew the interest of the U.S. State Department and a strong rebuke from officials in India's technology industry.

Judge Vikramjit Sen granted bail to Bajaj but asked him to surrender his passport and not leave the country without the court's permission, said Rajiv Luthra, his lawyer.

Police say they arrested Bajaj because he violated India's Information Technology Act of 2000, which makes a criminal offense out of "publishing, transmitting, or causing to publish any information in electronic form, which is obscene."

But eBay, which bought Bazaar.com for \$50 million in June, said it was "outraged" by the arrest. The sex video sale took place without the knowledge of company officials, it said. The seller violated the policies of Bazaar.com and was deleted from the Web site as soon as the company became aware of the incident, eBay said in a week-end statement.

The 17-year boy who used a camera-fitted mobile phone to film himself and his girlfriend in an act of oral sex and then circulated the images to his friends was arrested Sunday night. He was brought to a court Tuesday and the judge ordered he be kept in a juvenile rehabilitation center until Jan. 4 for questioning. Police believe the boy's interrogation will help track how the video clip reached its seller, a student at India's most prestigious engineering college in the

Aging pope shares need

The Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II alluded to his aging difficulties, saying in a Christmas address Tuesday that each passing year brings a stronger need for help from God.

The 84-year-old pontiff, who is slowed by Parkinson's disease and hip and knee problems, spoke to cardinals from his wheeled throne. Short of breath, he handed much of his speech to an aide to read.

Reflecting on the past year, the pontiff thanked Vatican cardinals for their help and affection. "The passing years make one feel an ever more intense need for help from God and from men," he said.

Despite his ailments, the pope is keeping to

his usual challenging holiday schedule, which includes midnight Mass on Christmas Eve in St. Peter's Basilica.

His address Tuesday, in a marble room decked with Christmas garlands, was an overview of the year's work.

The pontiff highlighted efforts to promote unity between the various branches of Christianity, especially his attempts to break down barriers with the Orthodox Church. This year, the Vatican returned a Russian icon revered by the country's Orthodox community, then sent back the relics of two Orthodox saints taken from Constantinople.

Pope John Paul said he hopes such gestures would bring Christian denominations closer together. "It is urgent to re-establish full communion between Christians," he said.



A teenager, with towel over head, is brought to court in New Delhi, India, on Monday. The teen used his phone's camera to film a sex video that ended up on an auction site.

eastern city of Kharagpur, who was arrested a week ago.

Bajaj's arrest drew sharp criticism from industry officials and legal experts, who demanded that the government clarify the country's Information Technology Act. The law is ambiguous about who should be held responsible for such offenses.

Indian Trade minister Kamal Nath told CNBC television that police appear to have acted in haste.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday that American consular officials were providing help to the Indian-born Bajaj, a Harvard Business School graduate.

"It is a matter that we are paying quite a bit of attention to," Boucher said. "This situation is one of concern at highest levels of the U.S. government."

Digestive organs transplant a first at China hospital

BY ELAINE KURTENBACH

The Associated Press

SHANGHAI, China — A Chinese woman has received a new intestinal tract and four other organs in the first successful transplant of its kind in Asia, a Shanghai hospital said Tuesday.

Lu Xiao, a 38-year-old woman from Shanghai, suffered from polyps that covered her entire digestive system, and some had turned cancerous, the Shanghai Ruijin Hospital said.

In a 14-hour-long operation on Nov. 14 that involved 30 doctors and nurses, Lu received a new intestinal tract, stomach, spleen, liver and pancreas, said Wang Min, a hospital spokeswoman.

All the organs came from one donor, whose identity could not be disclosed because the family requested confidentiality, Wang said.

Lu was taken off a respirator two days after the operation and has been recovering well, Wang said. "She's able to take water and other fluids now," she added.

So far, Lu has not suffered from any organ rejection. However, the risk of future rejection or infection remains.

It was unclear why the hospital waited over a month to announce the operation.

Multiple organ transplants involving the intestinal tract initially were more common among children, but in recent years the success rate for such transplants among adults has improved.

A report on state-run television showed doctors handling bags of blood and surgeons at work in the operating theater. "Only about 20 adults around the world have received this kind of surgery, many of them in the United States, and only one in Europe. This is the first time for Asia," said Li Hongwei, the hospital's director.

In March, a 7½-month-old Italian girl received an intestinal tract, liver, stomach and three other organs in a transplant at a Miami hospital.

Wang said she did not know the costs of the transplant, but noted that the hospital has access to charity funds. "At this stage, we're focused only on her recovery," she said.

Chinese hospitals conduct more than 5,000 transplants each year.

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IN THE STATES

Big holiday discounts expected

BY ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Retailers are expected to increase discounting in the final days before Christmas after a late-buying binge failed to materialize during the last week-end before the holiday.

"You will really see some dramatic desperation discounting" this week, said Burt Flickinger III, managing partner at Strategic Resource Group, a New York-based industry consultant.

Such potential discounting is fueling worries that industry profits could be hurt in the fourth quarter. Flickinger estimated that profit margins will be cut by 3 percent to 5 percent in the fourth quarter as a result.

Merchants needed a hefty sales surge this past weekend to recoup lost business after seeing a slow start to a holiday selling season that never gathered steam.

Now, they'll have to rely even more heavily on procrastinators during the final days before Christmas, as well as post-holiday sales. Merchants also hope their bottom lines will be boosted by the redemp-



Holiday shoppers crowd the sidewalk along Michigan Avenue in Chicago on the final weekend before Christmas. Retailers are expected to introduce big discounts in the final days before Christmas to make up for a lack of sales this past weekend.

tion of gift cards, which are only recorded as sales when they are redeemed.

ShopperTrak, which tracks sales at 30,000 retail outlets, reported on Monday that total sales fell 3.3 percent for Saturday and Sunday, compared with the same two days last year.

Luxury stores — which have enjoyed robust sales as their well-heeled customers have benefited from the economy's recovery — had the best performance over the weekend, despite offering only selected discounts.

In contrast, mid-priced merchants — appealing to customers more vulnerable to

higher heating costs and a volatile job market — are being forced to pull in customers with big discounts and expanded hours.

J.C. Penney Co. Inc., for example, will be opening at 7 a.m. from Wednesday through Friday, offering deals on jewelry and coats.

Sears Roebuck and Co. is offering discounts of between 40 to 60 percent on jewelry and 25 percent to 30 percent off of watches from Monday through Friday, according to Bill Masterson, a company spokesman.

The Saturday before Christmas is traditionally the busiest day of the year for merchants.

Study: Teen drug abuse declining

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Youth smoking and drug abuse declined again this year, concludes a federal study that also found marked progress over the last decade in persuading teens to avoid cigarettes and illicit substances.

The smoking rate among younger teens is half what it was in the mid-1990s, and drug use by that group is down by one-third, says the University of Michigan study, done for the National Institute on Drug Abuse and released Tuesday. Less dramatic strides have been made among older teens.

Altogether, gains in 2004 over 2003 were modest. Researchers were bothered by increases in the use of inhalants such as glue, aerosols and the pain-control narcotic OxyContin. Use of most other drugs declined or held steady.

This was the eighth consecutive year that smoking rates among surveyed teens dropped, a turnaround that began in 1996 among students in grades eight and 10 and a year later among 12th-graders.

"We know that young people have come to see cigarette smoking as more dangerous, while they also have become less accepting of cigarette use, and these changes continued into 2004," said Lloyd Johnston, lead researcher for the Monitoring the Future study.

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STARS & STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper



Drug makers work on 1-pill AIDS treatment

BY LINDA A. JOHNSON
The Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — In an effort to make medication regimens easier for HIV-positive patients, two drug companies have announced plans to collaborate on the first all-in-one, one-day pill to treat the infection.

Currently, the best AIDS treatment requires patients to take two to four pills a day. Less than a decade ago, many patients had to take 25 to 30 pills a day, often at precise times and under specific conditions such as with food, making it extremely difficult for patients to stick to the complex schedule. Missing doses makes it easier for the virus to mutate and become resistant to medication.

In the first collaboration by competing AIDS drug makers, Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. and GlaxoSmithKline Inc. announced Monday that they have formed a joint venture to test and market a single pill combining three widely used medicines.

Because the three individual drugs already are on the market, the once-a-day combination could be approved and on sale as early as the second half of 2006, said David Rosen, a spokesman for Bristol-Myers Squibb.

"To have it all in a single pill is terrific," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute

of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The combination pill will be made up of Sustiva, made by Bristol-Myers Squibb, and two AIDS drugs made by GlaxoSmithKline: Viread and Emtriva.

The latter two drugs are members of the same class of AIDS drugs, but they block copying of the AIDS virus at two different points early in its replication cycle. Sustiva is from a different class of drugs and attacks the virus later in the cycle.

The pill is for people diagnosed HIV-positive who have never taken HIV medicines before.

The two companies will have to find a way to combine the component drugs so that the single pill is absorbed the same way, has identical effects, lasts in the body as long and has the same shelf life, said Robert Lipper, vice president of biopharmaceuticals research and development at Bristol-Myers.

The three drugs, which are already becoming the treatment of choice, together cost \$900 to \$1,000 a month. Rosen said it is too soon to say how much the single pill will cost.

The combination would not include a protease inhibitor, a class of drug that has been standard in recent years but that also carries many side effects.

Associated Press writer Marilyn Marchione in Milwaukee contributed to this story.

NH stops Aleve drug study

Risks included heart attacks, strokes

BY PAUL RECER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An Alzheimer's disease prevention trial was suspended after researchers said there were more heart attacks and strokes among patients taking naproxen, an over-the-counter pain reliever in use for 28 years and commonly known under the brand name Aleve.

The study, involving some 2,500 patients, was to test whether naproxen or Celebrex, both pain relievers, could reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease among healthy elderly patients who were at an increased risk of the disease.

Officials at the National Institutes of Health said the study was suspended after three years when it was found that patients taking naproxen had a 50 percent greater incidence of cardiovascular events — heart attack or stroke — than patients taking placebo.

Another factor, officials said, was the announcement last week that advertising for Celebrex was being halted after a study found that high doses of the drug were associated with an in-

crease in heart attack risk. Preliminary data from the Alzheimer's study, however, did not indicate an increased risk of heart attack or stroke for Celebrex, officials said.

Leslyn Crawford, acting commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, acknowledged Tuesday that the conflicting studies are confusing and call for continued evaluation. For now, she recommended following the dosage recommendations for the drugs.

"Any drug taken long enough and at high enough dosage can cause some difficulty," Crawford said on NBC's "Today."

"It would be premature to say what we're going to do with either one of these drugs, Celebrex or Aleve," he said. "However, we will keep all regulator options open and make some determinations as quickly as possible based on the data."

Celebrex, a prescription drug, and naproxen are both commonly used to treat the joint pain of arthritis. Naproxen has been approved for sale, first as a prescription and then as an over-the-counter drug, since 1976. Celebrex is in the same

class — COX2 enzyme inhibitors — as Vioxx, an arthritis drug recently taken off the market by its manufacturer after it was linked to an increase in heart attack and stroke.

Officials acknowledged that the implications for the continued use of naproxen are not clear and will require further study.

Dr. Sandra Kweider of the FDA said the NIH study was the first to show that naproxen might increase the risk of heart attack or stroke and that the findings are "confusing." No immediate action, however, is expected toward naproxen, she said.

"We are not contemplating any specific regulatory action over the next few days," Kweider said. "We will be working with the NIH to try to understand the data better and determine what will be appropriate from there."

Patients who routinely take naproxen should follow the drug package instructions carefully, Kweider said, including the directions to not take it for more than 10 days, and to consult a doctor if pain persists.

Efforts to obtain reaction Monday night produced no answers at phone numbers for Bayer Healthcare, the maker of Aleve.

A Special Holiday Wish for the Troops

Merry Christmas!

STARS AND STRIPES

Your Hometown Newspaper

Marion Bergan inserts a needle in the face of Paula Scardamalia during a Dec. 10 facial acupuncture treatment in Albany, N.Y.



Youth-seekers turning to facial acupuncture

BY MICHAEL HILL
The Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — Paula Scardamalia has pins in her face — nine tiny ones angling out near her eyes, mouth and jaw.

The pins were poked in to tighten chin skin and erase lines on the 52-year-old woman's face. The practice, called facial acupuncture, is becoming popular as a sort of holistic alternative to trying to turn back time through toxins or surgery.

"This has got to be healthier than Botox or a surgical facelift," said Scardamalia, the little needles wagging slightly.

Interest in facial acupuncture might be connected to the rising popularity of alternative medicine, or to society's obsession with youth and beauty, or to the mass of aging baby boomers. Whatever the reason, acupuncturists report a wave of interest in the ancient Chinese practice.

Acupuncturists typically stimu-

late selected points on the body with hair-thin pins to promote good health and alleviate pain. They view it as correcting energy imbalances along the body's "meridians," which carry an energy flow called qi (pronounced "chee") — a concept many mainstream physicians say lacks scientific evidence.

In facial acupuncture, needles are usually stuck in wrinkles and saggy to bring more blood, qi and muscle tone to an area. The theory is that a healthy face is a better-looking face.

Marion Bergan, the licensed acupuncturist who treated Scardamalia for a demonstration, offers "facial rejuvenation acupuncture" in addition to her medical acupuncture.

Most of Bergan's facial customers are women in their 50s and 60s. But Wakefield said her practice gets a fair share of men, too.

"They realize in order to keep their jobs and to get jobs, they need to look younger," Wakefield said.

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Remembering a WWII vet

I've appreciated reading the coverage of the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. My uncle, Pvt. Irving (Buddy) Clements, died in that battle 60 years ago.

According to records we have read, the Germans had captured several soldiers. My uncle was on a hill nearby and saw what had happened. He began to fire at the Germans who were guarding the men, giving some of them time to escape. He was killed by the enemy returning fire.

My dad and all three of his brothers were in Europe fighting at that time. My grandfather had said that she woke up one night out of a sound sleep to see a vision of a soldier. She knew then that one of her sons had been killed. She was notified shortly after of Uncle Buddy's death. He was buried at the cemetery in Luxembourg.

I have a lot of respect for the men who fought for our freedom in World War II. I want to thank them for their sacrifice. I know that my dad was forever changed by the time he spent here in Germany.

I'm glad to be able to support my husband as he does his part in the war we fight today. I pray that we can stand firm and finish what the enemy has started, just like our fathers before us.

Martie Carter
Heidelberg, Germany

Hunting preserves balance

This is in response to "Hunting photo without necessity" (letter, Dec. 11).

The writer expresses that "yahoos are not there attempting to prove their manhood (or lack of it)." However, it is not the case with the vast majority of hunters. The majority of hunters do not condone killing wildlife solely for trophy purposes. However, there is a small minority that does, and this is deplorable.

There is an American stereotype of "Redneck Bob" dressed in camouflage exterminating all deer in America. Not so! Most hunters are skilled, intelligent individuals who are making wins against animals

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superior senses of smell, eyesight and hearing.

American founders imported 40,000 white-tailed deer to America, and to date, there are about 5 million in Texas. The deer population rises while hunters' numbers are declining, which is offsetting the balance, especially without any wild predatory animals in the United States.

Hunting is wildlife management. Wildlife must be harvested to reduce the disease in animal populations and to reduce crops and habitat damage from overpopulation.

Hunting licenses are regulated and harvested animal numbers are managed by game officials. Harvesting animals for management and food purposes is not cowardly, it is right. Many states allow hunters to donate deer to food programs as a humanitarian act.

The act of killing is barbaric in nature, so I concur with the writer on this point. To truly see the "necessary" barbaric nature of killing animals for food, I recommend that Stars and Stripes run an article on animal slaughterhouse operations.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Steven Schantz
Camp Liberty, Iraq

'Star Wars' fails another screen test

Los Angeles Times

I should surprise no one that the first test in two years of the "Star Wars" missile defense system fizzled last Wednesday when a "kill vehicle" never left its silo in the Marshall Islands. The startling thing, however, has been if the \$85 million test had succeeded.

Ever since President Reagan called for this ill-conceived system in 1983, his conservative acolytes have been determined to make it a reality despite widespread evidence of its impracticability. Two decades later, it has gone nowhere despite President Bush's rash promise that he would have a limited system in place by 2005.

The government has spent about \$130 billion on the program and is slated to invest \$50 billion more over the next five years. Yet the only tests that have succeeded were rigged; the missiles being intercepted were equipped with homing devices. The most recent test before Wednesday, on Dec. 11, 2002, failed when a warhead didn't detach from its booster rocket.

Richard Lehner, a spokesman for the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, said the [latest] test didn't represent a failure of the system, just a glitch. This is like a repairman telling you there's nothing wrong with your car just because it won't start, that it simply has a mechanical problem.

What 'holiday' is it?

I went to a "holiday party." I have been wished a "happy holiday" over and over. The Scout leader asked me to bring a dozen "holiday cookies" to the Scout meeting. "Holiday" this and "holiday" that, I feel like yelling at the top of my lungs, "What holiday is it?"

It is, of course, the Christmas holiday. It's the Christmas holiday not only because the pope and religious prelates around the world said so, but also because the U.S. Congress and President Grant said so.

It is a federally recognized holiday called Christmas. In that respect, it's no different from the 4th of July, Memorial Day, etc.

Today, 87 percent of Americans believe in Christmas. Of the remaining 13 percent, the vast majority, if wished a Merry Christmas, likely will say, "Thank you" and go on with their lives. That leaves a tiny minority that is trying to bring an end to Christmas as we know it in the United States.

Social positions are like combat positions in that more are simply abandoned to the enemy than overrun. Because the American Civil Liberties Union and a tiny percentage of hypersensitive people threaten every tradition of Christmas, you are more likely to be sued for wishing a co-worker or classmate a Merry Christmas than running a Ponzi scheme at the old-folks' home. So, to avoid the hassle, many just give in, like getting whining children what they want. But most parents know that the more you give in, the more they will whine. So, peace and joy, for a savior has been born, and the crybabies have to be told that enough is enough.

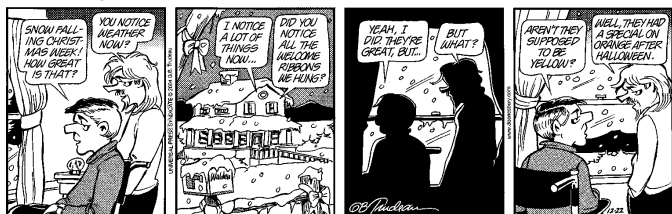
So, Merry, Merry Christmas, everybody. To the vast majority, take the greeting as it is intended, a message of hope, peace and joy, for a savior has been born.

To the lunatic fringe, think of it as nothing more than glad tidings for the federal holiday that is, after all, Christmas.

Doug Schmick
Stuttgart, Germany

Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



OPINION

'Buying American' will lower trade deficit

BY THEA LEE

Should Americans buy American? In the holiday shopping season and throughout the year, consumers should take the responsibility to be informed and aware of basic facts about what they are buying — how and where the goods they buy are produced.

Furthermore, they should give some thought to the impact of their purchases on the U.S. and global economy, on decent jobs and on the environment.

That isn't to say, however, that consumers can bear the entire burden of social responsibility; governments must set and enforce appropriate rules to protect workers, public health and the environment; and corporations have a responsibility to obey the laws and be socially and environmentally responsible.

But consumers can and do make a difference, and they should welcome the power they hold at the cash register. Deliberate and thoughtful consumer purchases can help strengthen the bargaining power of workers fighting for decent and humane working conditions, and send a powerful message to corporate headquarters about the standards consumers expect for the goods and services they buy.

When consumers choose American-made products, they are supporting good jobs in their communities, as well as an expanded tax base that can fund schools, roads, research and social programs.

Manufacturing jobs have traditionally been the backbone of the American middle class, providing decent wages and benefits, but also a ripple effect in job creation throughout the economy. Each manufacturing

job, it turns out, is associated with two to three times as many secondary jobs as those in services or retail.

Faster productivity growth in the manufacturing sector, relative to the rest of the economy, is the foundation for noninflationary wage growth over time.

In addition, buying American is one way consumers can help stem our national borrowing binge. This year, our trade deficit — the annual excess of imports over exports — will be well over half a trillion dollars, or more than \$1 million a minute.

The October trade deficit hit an all-time high of \$55.5 billion.

We fund these expenditures by borrowing from abroad, and our national debt is now close to \$3 trillion.

These enormous and unsustainable deficits eventually will cause the dollar to fall relative to other currencies, which will make American products more competitive, but also likely will lead to higher inflation and higher interest rates. By choosing American-made products, especially big-ticket items such as cars or appliances, American consumers can help reduce our need to borrow from abroad.

In addition to seeking out American-made items, consumers should look for products and services made by union workers. The union label denotes high-quality products and services made by skilled workers who are treated fairly and decently by their employers.

Union workers earn more money, have better benefits, are more productive and have greater job security than nonunion workers. The pay differential is 27 percent for all workers, and this difference is even greater for women, African-Americans and Latinos.



It isn't always possible to buy American-made goods, even with the best of intentions. When buying goods from other countries, consumers should also try to stay informed about working conditions, labor laws and corporate practices.

Information about workers' rights in different countries is available through several sources: The U.S. State Department publishes annual reports on human rights conditions around the world, and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the International Labor Organization provide detailed information on labor rights.

Watchdog groups — including the Worker

Rights Consortium, Students Against Sweatshops, the Campaign for Labor Rights, the National Labor Committee and the International Labor Rights Fund, among others — monitor corporate practices and expose egregious violations.

At the end of the day, governments, corporations and consumers all have a role to play in improving working conditions here and around the world, and in making responsible economic decisions.

When you go to the mall with your credit card, get into the true holiday spirit, and make your dollars count toward a fairer and more humane world.

Thea Lee is assistant director for international economics at the AFL-CIO labor union.

U.S. consumers shouldn't consider products' origin

BY MARK J. PERRY

American consumers should practice nondiscriminatory shopping this Christmas without any regard to the national origin of the products they buy.

Those consumers who do not intentionally alter their holiday shopping habits to "buy American" most likely will end up worse off, and will become confused in the process.

Attempts by shoppers to shun "foreign" products during the holiday season to bring down the U.S. trade deficit won't work. And even if changes in holiday shopping were successful at lowering our trade deficit, it does not necessarily follow that our economy would be better off. Here's why.

First, in our increasingly global economy, the distinction between "foreign" and "American" goods is becoming increasingly difficult and meaningless.

With global trade at an all-time high, all "foreign" products most likely have some U.S. components, and products "made in America" typically contain foreign inputs. The automobile market clearly illustrates this point.

Are the Toyota, Mazda and Mitsubishi vehicles built in the United States by UAW workers for foreign-based automakers with both domestic and foreign parts "American" or "foreign" cars? Now that Michigan-based Ford owns Jaguar and Volvo, are those foreign-produced vehicles containing U.S.-built components really "foreign" vehicles? And does it really matter? No. In the search to find only "American" products, holiday shoppers will end up confused, and will unnecessarily limit their shopping options.

They could also end up with a higher shop-

ping bill and fewer gifts by passing up bargain-priced imports.

Second, our trade deficit is ultimately caused by the fact that national spending by American consumers, businesses and government exceeds our national income. Holiday shoppers who substitute "American" products for "foreign" gifts, without altering their overall level of consumption, will not affect our trade deficit by even \$1.

Only if we consume less and save more would our trade deficit be affected. The only effective way for holiday shoppers to cut the budget deficit would be to reduce spending, which would lead to weak December retail sales and would stall the economic recovery.

Instead of altering holiday shopping habits, consumers concerned about the trade deficit should write to members of Congress and encourage politicians to stop the growth

in deficit spending, which is one of the main reasons for our large trade deficit.

Unfortunately, those who advocate a "Buy American" strategy to promote prosperity are recycling the discredited mercantilist theory of the 1800s, which claims that: a) exports and trade surpluses are good, and b) imports and trade deficits are bad. In reality, neither of those positions is correct, and in fact, both imports and trade deficits can actually be very beneficial.

To understand this, think about how you benefit from your personal trade deficit with your local grocer.

If you import \$500 of groceries every month from your local grocery store, and your grocer buys nothing from you, you would have a monthly \$500 trade deficit with your local supermarket. Could you possibly make your family better off by buying

only \$100 worth of groceries this month to reduce your trade deficit with your grocer? If not, then altering your holiday shopping to reduce our country's trade deficit won't make you better off either.

Holiday shoppers should be thankful that they can shop in a global marketplace more conveniently, and at a lower cost this holiday season than at any other time in history.

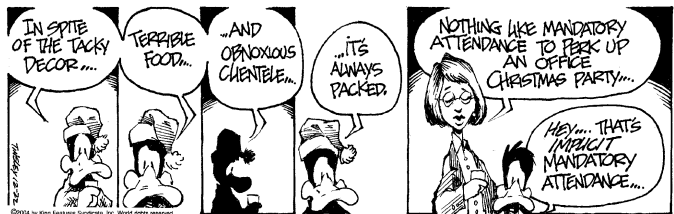
Consumers should spend wisely on gifts to get the lowest price and the best value, but should pay no attention to labels of national origin.

Whether you're buying Mongolian cashmere, toys from China or a Turkish bathrobe, or taking a sunny Mexican holiday vacation, enjoy guilt-free Christmas shopping and traveling in a global economy, and don't worry about the trade deficit.

Mark J. Perry is an economist at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



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Suspect's husband offers sympathy

Kan. man says he believed accused wife who claimed baby was theirs

BY HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH
The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — When Kevin Montgomery was presented with a newborn child, he said he believed his wife's story that the girl was theirs. He had no idea, he said, that an eight-months-pregnant woman had just been strangled in her home, her baby cut from her womb.

The couple named the baby girl Abigail, and did the first thing any proud parents would: drove her home so they could show her off.

But the next day, Lisa Montgomery, 36, was charged with kidnapping resulting in death for allegedly strangling Bobbie Jo Stinnett and taking the baby.

Lisa Montgomery appeared Monday before a packed court room in Kansas City, Kan., where her attorney refused to waive her right to preliminary and identity

hearings. Both hearings have been scheduled for Thursday morning.

"I had no idea," Kevin Montgomery said outside the courthouse. He said he knew nothing about the grisly allegations against his wife, and he has not been charged with any wrongdoing.

A funeral for Stinnett, 23, was planned for Tuesday.

The baby, named Victoria Jo by her father, Zeb Stinnett, spent the weekend in a Topeka hospital before being released Monday.

"When we received her, she was in pretty good shape," said hospital spokeswoman Carol Wheeler. According to authorities, Kevin Montgomery picked up his wife and the infant in Topeka last week, and drove about 40 miles south to Melvern, Kan., where the couple lived — showing off the child. Authorities said Lisa Montgomery had told family and friends that she was preg-



Kevin Montgomery, center, speaks to reporters Monday outside the Robert J. Dole Federal Courthouse in Kansas City, Kan., after the first court appearance of his wife, Lisa Montgomery, who is charged with kidnapping resulting in the death of Bobbie Jo Stinnett.

nant.

Authorities have said Lisa Montgomery gained access to Stinnett's Skidmore, Mo., home by expressing interest in Stinnett's dogs — rat terriers which

she raised.

Stinnett and Lisa Montgomery were photographed together at a dog show months before last week's attack, a woman who attended the show said.

Doctors: Tiniest surviving baby OK

BY JOHN BIEMER
Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO — When Rumaissa Rahman was born, she weighed just 8.6 ounces and was no bigger than a cell phone.

Three months later, doctors say she's doing "extremely well," and will be introduced Tuesday by Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Ill., as the world's tiniest surviving baby. Rumaissa was born 1.3 ounces lighter than the previous record holder in 1989.

Rumaissa, whose name means "white as milk" in India, was born at the hospital on Sept. 19 along with her fraternal twin sister, Hiba, who weighed 1 pound 4 ounces. Hiba's name means "gift from God."

The twins, Mahabehn Shaik, 23, of Hanover Park, gave birth by Caesarian section after 25 weeks and six days of gestation (a typical, full-term pregnancy is about 40 weeks). Shaik entered a hospital early because she had developed severe pre-eclampsia, high blood pressure, which was affecting her health as well as Rumaissa's activity in the womb.

Shaik and her husband, Mohammed Abdul Rahman, 32, both originally from Hyderabad, India, could not hold their daughters until their second month because the babies were hooked to IVs and were inside incubators. The babies were conceived naturally, hospital officials said, and are the first children for the couple, who were married in India in January.

Studies suggest that Rumaissa, who now weighs about 2 pounds and 10 ounces, will develop normally, according to Dr. Jonathan Muraskas, professor of pediatrics and neonatal-perinatal medicine at Loyola University Chicago's Stritch School of Medicine. Ultrasounds have shown that Rumaissa's head is normal and there is no bleeding in her brain, a common complication that can put a baby at risk for cerebral palsy.

The previous record holder for world's smallest baby, Madeline Mann, goes to high school in Hoffman Estates, Ill., and celebrated her 15th birthday in June. She also was born at Loyola after her mother developed pre-eclampsia.

Near 100 mph winds create havoc in Colorado

BY ERIN GARTNER
The Associated Press

DENVER — Wind gusting to nearly 100 mph swept across Colorado on Monday, forcing skiers off the slopes, closing highways and peeling the roof off a high school gym while a basketball team practiced inside.

No serious injuries were reported, but the gusty weather denied everything from driving to walking for most of northern and central Colorado.

Gusts reached 90 mph in Breckenridge and forced the ski resort to shut down a chair lift.

"We generally get pretty high winds before a storm moves in," resort spokeswoman Emily Jacob said. "We really pay close attention to that. It's a safety concern for us."

The National Weather Service issued a high-wind warning along the heavily populated Front Range after 95 mph winds were reported in Superior. Gusts reached 98 mph at Carter Lake near Berthoud and ranged from 79 mph to 85 mph in Louisville, Boulder and Golden.



Ken Wicklund cleans up the remains of a spruce tree that was blown down by high winds Monday in Longmont, Colo. Wicklund, a city forester, said the tree was about 50 years old.

LONGMONT
COLORADO DAILY
TIMES-CALLER

At Monarch High School in Louisville, several students escaped injury when a portion of the gym roof was torn off. The school was closed for winter vacation, though basketball players practicing inside had to be evacuated.

The wind overturned a small plane at a Denver-area airport

and knocked an empty tractor-trailer on its side in Littleton, State Patrol Trooper Don Moseman said. The driver was treated for minor injuries.

Trees were blown down elsewhere in Louisville and a roof under construction at a new recreation center was peeled off, police

said.

Authorities closed Colorado Highway 93 near the former Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant northwest of Denver for about an hour after winds knocked down a power line.

The winds eased as a cold front began to arrive.

Holocaust survivors, U.S. settle claims GIs stole Jews' property

BY CATHERINE WILSON
The Associated Press

MIAMI — The U.S. government has agreed to settle with Holocaust survivors who claim that American Army officers during World War II plundered a trainload of family treasures that had been seized by the Nazis. The families and the Justice Department told a judge Monday that they have agreed in principle to a financial award over the "Gold Train," but the exact terms have not been worked out.

The lawsuit sought up to \$10,000 each

for as many as 30,000 Hungarian Jews and their survivors.

U.S. District Judge Patricia Seitz told attorneys to deliver a package detailing a worldwide settlement by Feb. 18.

"This agreement is a step closer to the goal we all share, a measure of justice for these Holocaust victims and their families," said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.

In 1945, in the waning days of the war, the Nazis sent 24 train cars toward Germany carrying gold, silver, paintings, Oriental rugs, furs and other household goods

seized from Hungarian Jews.

Nazis, Hungarians and Austrians stole from the train along the way.

The train was then intercepted by U.S. forces, and American officers helped themselves to china, silverware and artwork for their homes and offices, according to an advisory commission appointed by then-President Clinton.

The train and cargo worth an estimated \$50 million to \$120 million were shrouded in official secrecy until a presidential commission on Holocaust assets detailed it in

1999.

"No way the money we would get would help with our losses. We were not even thinking about it. We just want to have closure on this," said Alex Moskovic of Hobe Sound, Fla., a Holocaust survivor who attended Monday's hearing.

However, New York University professor Ronald Zweig, who wrote a book on the train and served as the government's expert, said that the Gold Train has taken on mythic proportions and that the Army made "a very serious effort" to protect the contents.



Jenna Hamilton stands in the parking lot of the Carousel Mall in Syracuse, N.Y., on Dec. 15. Hamilton considers herself to be in the "search and destroy" classification when it comes to finding a parking spot. She roams the aisles, cruising endlessly until the perfect spot opens up.

Parking lots harbor 4 'species' of stressed-out holiday drivers

BY WILLIAM KATES
The Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — John Hrynyn emerged from his car at the Carousel Center mall after nabbing a parking space 100 feet from an entrance.

The 55-year-old scrap yard owner admits he's the type to slowly prowling the mall parking lot until he finds a spot close to the building. "I always look for the closest spot to the door, and 90 percent of the time I find one," he said.

In other words, he's a classic "search and destroyer."

Connecticut-based Response Insurance surveyed its drivers and identified what it says are the four main species of mall parkers: "search and destroyers," "lay and wait," "stalkers" and "see it and take it."

But in the asphalt jungle, it turns out, it's the least aggressive who are getting the last laugh.

Search and destroyers roam the aisles, cruising endlessly for the perfect spot. Lay and wait parkers position themselves at the end of an aisle and wait for a space to open up in what they think to be their territory. Stalkers, the most predatory, slowly follow shoppers leaving the store back to their parking spot.

The three methods increase the risk of situations that can lead to stress or conflict. Hrynyn was lucky

he didn't run into another search and destroyer waiting for the same spot, said Ray Palermo, a spokesman for Response Insurance.

"It's not like road rage, but it can cause a lot of stress nevertheless," he said.

The favored method is to see it and take it, where shoppers don't care how far they have to wait. The company says it's less stressful and helps drivers save the most time.

Even the AAA likes this option. On its list of tips for surviving holiday driving, the automobile association advises people to "play the outfield. Outlying areas have more spaces, lighter traffic and a lower risk of collision."

The advice comes at a time when parking lots may be crisscrossed with last-minute shoppers. The National Retail Federation estimated that up to 20 percent of holiday sales would occur the week before Christmas.

Jenna Hamilton, 24, gets irritated by the lay and waiters

and the stalkers.

"You're trying to put your bags in the car," Hamilton said.

"You want to get your car warmed up, everything adjusted. Then you see this car in the rearview mirror with its blinker on, and a line of cars waiting behind them. It can be nerve-racking, as if holiday shopping weren't stressful enough."

AAA's tips for mall parking

Some tips for drivers headed to mall parking lots around the holidays:

- Side entrances usually have less traffic and more convenient spaces.
- Outlying areas have more spaces, lighter traffic and a lower risk of collision.
- Use your headlights when scouring for spaces, even in the daytime.
- Avoid getting into a space by either backing into it or "pulling through" two spaces.
- Avoid parking between tall SUVs or minivans.
- Always be on the lookout for pedestrians.

From The Associated Press

Report: Attack on LNG tankers would be deadly

BY H. JOSEF HEBERT
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A terror attack on a tanker delivering liquefied natural gas at a U.S. port could set off a fire so hot it would burn skin and damage buildings nearly a mile away, government scientists say in a report expected to influence where new multi-billion-dollar terminals will be built.

The report from a government nuclear weapons lab, a 160-page unclassified version of which was obtained Monday by The Associated Press, characterizes an LNG tanker spill from a terror attack as a low probability. If successful, however, it would become "a high consequence event" that could produce massive injuries and property damage, the report said.

The yearlong study by scientists at Sandia National Laboratory, a premier federal research facility, provides the most detailed analysis to date of the potential public safety impact of a terrorist attack on an LNG transport tanker.

While the report does not recommend prohibiting tankers from carrying LNG through heavily populated areas, it says those shipments should occur only after "the most rigorous deterrent measures" are in place to reduce the probability of an attack.

The tankers, each of which carries up to 30 million gallons of LNG, arrive every few days at four U.S. terminals: Everett, Mass.; Cove Point, Md.; Elba Island, Ga., and Lake Charles, La. All are expanding as regulators weigh the merits of putting more than three dozen more such facilities at U.S. ports, many in urban areas.

In its minus-260 degrees liquid state, LNG cannot explode and is not flammable. If a missile or explosive should tear a hole in a

tanker or a storage tank, however, the escaping liquid would be transformed instantaneously into a gas and probably would ignite in a massive fire.

The Sandia report said terrorists, using readily available weapons and technology, could blast a 10-foot hole into the side of an LNG tanker.

The assessment evaluates a range of scenarios that would result in release of millions of gallons of LNG from a transport tanker.

The scenarios include a takeover of a vessel by an insider or hijacker, external attacks using explosive-laden boats, triggered explosions or rocket-propelled grenades or missiles.

Detailed discussions of specific threats were included only in the classified version of the report, but the unclassified version examined the general impact such an attack and LNG fire on water would have to people within a mile of the spill.

"What we've learned is that we can significantly reduce the likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring with security planning and mitigation," said Mark Maddox, deputy assistant secretary at the Energy Department, which commissioned the study.

Even with many details left out of the unclassified version, the report describes a harrowing potential for disaster if a terror attack were to succeed in releasing millions of gallons of LNG from a double-hulled vessel that typically carries more than 30 million gallons of the frosty liquid fuel.

The Sandia scientists identified "several credible" terror scenarios that the report said would result in at least one — possibly as many as three — of a tanker's cargo tanks being breached. That would ignite a pool of fire to spread several hundred yards in all directions, the report said.



An LNG tanker leaves Boston Harbor in January after off-loading its cargo. Terrorists have the ability to blast a 10-foot hole into the side of an LNG tanker that could unleash a massive spill and fire so hot it would burn skin and damage buildings nearly a mile away, government scientists say in a new report.

Officials arrest 7 in raids on dog fights

BY ELLEN BARRY
Los Angeles Times

ATLANTA — Law enforcement authorities arrested seven people over the weekend on animal cruelty charges stemming from "hog dogging" events, in which pit bulls or bulldogs are placed in a pen with pigs or wild bears and are timed as they pin the squealing animals with their powerful jaws.

Several raids took place in Alabama, Arizona and South Caroli-

na; the events' organizers also were charged with animal fighting. Robert Stewart, chief of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, said more arrests are expected.

"It's had enough to put animals of the same species against one another. Now we're staging events with different species in combat," said Wayne Paccelle, president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States. "I shake my head and am disgusted, but I am never entirely surprised."

In hog dog rodeo — also known as "hog catch trials," "hog dog trials" or "hog baiting" — a feral pig or hog is thrust into a pen. A dog then chases the hog until it can force the animal to the ground.

Tanya Holland, who raises pit bulls in Florida, said animal-rights activists have misrepresented the events.

"If you could see the energy in the dog and see how much they enjoy working," said Holland, 32, a veterinary technician. "I know how much dogs like catching that pig for me."

Church thefts

PA PITTSBURGH — The housekeeper at a Catholic parish's rectory near Pittsburgh stole more than \$173,000 from collections by rifling through the envelopes early each Monday and then making computer entries to cover up the thefts, authorities said.

Amy J. Caldwell, Margara of Scotland Church in Green Tree for nearly a decade, was charged with theft.

Church officials began a general investigation of their finances after state police in West Virginia found two bank deposit bags by a road in January. That prompted an audit, and the church changed the way it counted and stored its collection money — putting it into sealed, tamperproof bags.

Once that happened, the church's weekly collections increased dramatically, leading church officials to conclude that someone had been stealing money.

Off-color holiday humor

KY LOUISA — A weekly newspaper in eastern Kentucky has apologized for mistakenly printing sexually explicit Christmas jokes that left some blushing readers as red as Santa's suit.

The Lawrence County Storm also retrieved unsold copies of the edition with the jokes from newsstands in and around Louisa, where it is published.

Louisa Mayor Teddy Preston said he received phone calls from constituents who were angered and embarrassed by the jokes.

"It was very, very vulgar," Preston said. "It is something that shouldn't have been written in a local newspaper, or anywhere else, for that matter."

Some of the jokes were simply corny, but others put Santa in sexual situations, or made light of the religious side of Christmas.

Elva McCoy, a member of the newspaper staff, said someone on the staff had been reading the jokes on the Internet and that they had inadvertently made their way into the newspaper.

Coal-fired power plant

CO DENVER — State regulators have approved Colorado's first coal-fired power plant in 25 years. The \$1.35 billion facility is designed to generate 780 megawatts of electricity a day — enough for 750,000 customers.

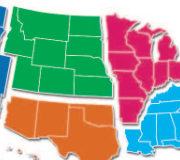
Under the agreement for the new unit at the Comanche Generating Station in Pueblo, Xcel Energy must upgrade pollution-control equipment at the two existing units.

The Public Utilities Commission approved the agreement 2-1. If an air quality permit is approved next year by state health officials, construction on the plant could begin in 2006.

"It's a win-win-win," said Xcel vice president Fred Stofel, referring to environmentalists, the company and ratepayers.

Teacher arrested

CA SAN JOSE — An elementary-school teacher has been arrested for alleged possession of



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

child pornography after a student in his classroom saw explicit pictures on the teacher's computer, according to police.

Christopher Casey, 44, turned himself in to police after detectives seized computers from his home, his classroom and a relative's home, authorities said.

Casey is a third-grade teacher at Castlemont Elementary School and has worked for the school district for 15 years, according to police.

Tree ban reversed

FL NEW PORT RICHEY — The Christmas tree decorations were being rehung at Pasco County buildings after the reversal of a county authority's finding that the trees were unacceptable religious symbols.

Trees had been removed from county buildings after the initial decision, which allowed them only in "sempiternal" areas such as personal offices.

That decision drew angry reactions from residents and the American Center for Law & Justice, a law firm founded by televangelist Pat Robertson.

In a revised decision, the authority said that a Christmas tree is a

purely secular symbol, along with Santa Claus and candy canes.

Rare bird found

TX BROWNSVILLE — A bird rarely found in the United States was discovered at a wildlife refuge in the Rio Grande Valley, officials said.

The bird, a female Cinnamon Collared Grosbeak, was found Dec. 10 at Camp Lila Sims after it apparently crashed into a window, said Pat Burchfield, the deputy director and zoologist at the Gladys Porter Zoo. The bird did not survive striking the window.

The bird, a native of Northern Mexico, is rarely found in the United States. This is the first specimen, said Mark Lockwood, with the Texas Bird Records Committee.

Educators OK strike

MO ST. LOUIS — St. Louis teachers have authorized a strike against the state's largest school district. The vote was 1,427-225, easily more than the two-thirds majority necessary. No walkout date has been set. The district's 3,450 teachers have worked without a contract since July. Missouri law doesn't allow public school teachers to strike, but doesn't specify penalties.

Large land purchase

NV INCLINE VILLAGE — The largest private land holding on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe would be acquired for \$75 million under a public buyout being considered by federal land managers.

The Bureau of Land Management is considering purchase of the 777-acre parcel that features scenic Incline Lake. If acquired, the land would be transferred to the U.S. Forest Service for public recreational use.

Tattoo for nonagenarian

PA DuBOIS — Ralph Bonebreak was born to be wild — in 1910.

The 94-year-old man recently got his first tattoo at the Tainted Flesh Tattoo and Piercing Studio in his hometown. Bonebreak emerged from under the needle with a locomotive on his right arm and an eagle on his left.

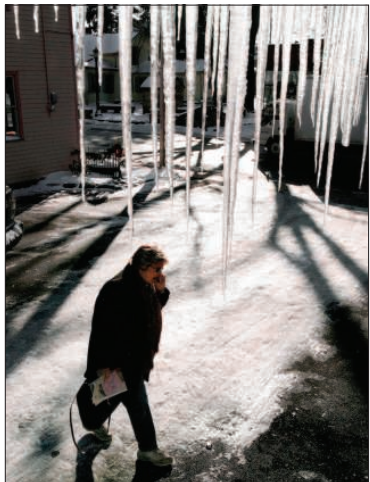
A lot of men who went into the military got tattoos, but Bonebreak's 38-year career with the railroad kept him out of the service, said his friend, Eve Camuso.

"He's always wanted a tattoo, but back then the only place you could get one was at the county fair," Camuso said.

"They weren't very clean." Bonebreak selected a train to commemorate his time with the railroad. A belt buckle inspired his eagle design.

Skyway toll raise

IN HAMMOND — The new operator of the Chicago Skyway will raise toll rates to discourage tractor-trailer drivers from traveling during peak times. Effective Feb. 16, tolls for vehicles carrying three or more axles will increase during the peak hours of 4 a.m. to 8 p.m. Drivers of passenger cars will pay the same rates all day.



Point of entry

A woman walks by icicles on her way to Violet's Florist and Gifts in the Grand Pacific Junction of Olmsted Falls, Ohio.



Flake face

William Shaffer, 9, from Tampa, Fla., braves the heavy snow and low temperatures as he plays in the snow in Banner Elk, N.C.



Snow-leaping lion

Oshana, a lioness at the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park, uses what is left of a snowman as a catapult to reach a nearby rock in San Diego.



Giving kids the world

Syracuse University football player Matt Faruolo rides on a carousel with 4-year-old Karissa Sibley in Kissimmee, Fla. Faruolo was spending time with children at Give Kids The World Village, a nonprofit resort in Kissimmee for children with life-threatening illnesses.



Jokesters, stage right

Fifth-graders Nancy Choi, second right, and Chelsea Atkinson, far right, joke with each other before going on stage to perform their part in "The Nutcracker" at Cimmaron Elementary School in Aurora, Colo.



Three little rascals

From left, Hunter Taylor, Eva Lenhard and Gillian Wittstock with the Steppin' Out dance company perform a Little Rascals number in the annual December dance performance in Petersburg, Alaska.



Claus with a cause

Santa Claus is framed through the American flag as he waves and rings the bell at cars passing by in Fort Smith, Ark. Claus, hired by Lin's Thrift Store, was donating half his proceeds to help needy children.



Up in the rafters

J.R. Richardson positions a scaffold as he prepares to cut a rafter from the roof while helping dismantle the old University of Illinois Sheep Barn in Champaign, Ill.

Reporter drops charges

NC GRAHAM — Prosecutors have dropped criminal charges filed against a developer accused of assaulting and threatening a newspaper reporter.

The reporter asked prosecutors to drop charges against Ernie Koury Jr. after he apologized. Koury had been charged with communicating threats and simple assault.

James Moffat, a reporter for The Times-News of Burlington, said that Koury grabbed him by the throat and threatened to kill him earlier this month at the Burlington Municipal Building. Koury allegedly was unhappy with the newspaper's coverage of a private club that Koury is involved with opening.

Crying over spilled milk

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A milk truck overturned in California's Marin County, spilling 4,500 gallons of milk into Nicasio Creek and closing the roadway for 90 minutes, the California Highway Patrol said.

The truck, which had picked up a load of milk from a dairy just before the accident, ruptured and milk flowed across the road, down a hillside and into the creek.

Workers from the California Department of Fish and Game responded to the accident to oversee cleanup of the milk, which can be harmful to fish, authorities said.

Trees at a premium

HI HONOLULU — A shortage of Christmas trees in Hawaii has raised prices to more than \$200.

Tree buyers camped outside a shopping center hours before dawn to await a shipment of 130 noble fir flown in from Oregon. A crowd of more than 200 people had gathered by morning, when a salesman announced the trees would cost \$165 to \$200. Consumers complained that was at least twice the price charged just a few days earlier. In previous weeks, trees sold for \$30. Most Christmas trees sold in Hawaii have been delivered by cargo ships from farms in the Pacific Northwest. Last season, sellers suffered losses when hundreds went unsold, forcing them to give away the trees.

But this year, smaller orders caused a major shortage across the islands. Many major retailers sold out. But some customers rebelled. "He thinks he's got us because he's got the trees. But we have the money, and maybe we won't pay," shouted Barbara Taylor.

Bowling alley to close

MO ST. LOUIS — The historic Western Lanes — St. Louis' last full-sized bowling alley — will soon close its doors, sad news in a city that's home to the International Bowling Museum Hall of Fame.

AMF Bowling Worldwide Inc. says that next month the 36-lane bowling alley will end a run that began in 1962.

That will leave only four small alleys — two of them at Catholic parishes — in a city that once boasted about 30 bowling halls.

The Western is offering customers \$1-a-game bowling until its Jan. 30 closing.

Richard Weber, AMF's district

manager, said Western financially "has really gone south," starting to lose serious money more than a year ago.

Spending most on firs

CT GREENWICH — Wealthy Fairfield County tops the United States in Christmas tree sales, according to a survey of farmers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. While fresh trees sell for about \$30 in most parts of the state, the average price is \$50 to \$60 along the Gold Coast, growers say. One nursery sells North Carolina-grown Fraser fir up to 16 feet tall for \$500, including delivery and installation.

Deaths from overdosing

VA ROANOKE — Drug overdose deaths are apparently leveling off in western Virginia after years of sharp increases.

Dr. William Massello of the state medical examiner's office says 136 area residents died of overdoses through mid-August. Last year's total was 223. This year's total won't be known for some time, since it takes several months to confirm an overdose.

Driving fatalities decline

WI WAUSAU — Wisconsin is on pace to have significantly fewer traffic fatalities this year and fewer than the five-year average, safety experts say.

They cite increased seat belt use, stiffer law enforcement and a tougher drunken driving law. As of Friday, 744 people died in traffic fatalities, about 9 percent fewer than at the same time a year ago, officials reported.

Airport has tardy image

AZ PHOENIX — Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport ranked seventh-worst in the country among 31 major airports in on-time departures from January through October, according to U.S. Department of Transportation statistics.

The tardiest airline this year in Phoenix was Southwest Airlines. Southwest is revamping flight schedules to improve its on-time numbers, said Bill Owen, the airline's senior schedule planner.

Notices e-mailed free

DE DOVER — People interested in state government can now sign up for e-mail notices about everything from regulatory changes to General Assembly votes.

The free service includes most major state department and agencies. For several years, parents in Delaware have been able to get weather-related school closing notices e-mailed to them.

Bay of Pigs museum

FL MIAMI — Ground was broken for a museum recalling the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961. A restored B-26 bomber will be part of the display at Kendall-Tamiami Executive Airport.

Cuban-American exiles from Miami filed the ranks of the U.S.-led invasion. Ten exile pilots and four American airmen died in the attempt to dislodge Fidel Castro from power.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Cruz, Hayek bond

Spanish movie star Penelope Cruz and Mexican actress Salma Hayek hit it off from day one during the filming of "Bandits," a Western about two female outlaws set in 19th-century Mexico.



Cruz, left, and Hayek

Written and produced by French filmmaker Luc Besson, "Bandits" tells the story of two women — one rich, the other poor — who overcome their differences to work together robbing banks. The movie finishes shooting this week and does not yet have a release date.

Hayek, who was born in Coatzacoalcas in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz, said her role as the Robin Hood-style bandit came easy after a piece of advice from Besson.

"The first thing he told us was it was very important that these women be heroes but never stop being women, that they not be women trying to be men," Hayek said.

Stars pitch in for hurricane fund-raiser

A poster signed by Jennifer Lopez and a guitar signed by Wyclef Jean are on sale in an MTV Internet auction to raise money for hurricane victims.

Seventy-five percent of proceeds from the Caribbean Relief Auction will go to American Red Cross efforts in Haiti, Grenada and the Cayman Islands, according to MTV's Web site. The auction runs through Monday.

Other items include a poster signed by Britney Spears, tickets to "The Daily Show with Jay Stewart" and a travel package to Grenada. "I think fans pay attention," Jean said. "They are aware of the situation and want to do what they can to contribute."

The hip-hop star this week released a new music video, under the auspices of the U.N. World Food Program, to help Haitian victims of floods and rising political violence. He also has set up the charity Yele Haiti to help his impoverished homeland.

Scott shares her trauma

R&B singer Jill Scott says she was raped over 10 years ago by her then-boyfriend.

After dating the unidentified man sporadically since she was 15, Scott says in the January issue of *Sister 2* magazine that when she was about 19, she visited him at his apartment.

"I came over there just to be around him 'cause I liked him so much. I just wanted to be around him, it didn't matter," Scott, 32, told the magazine. "He attacked me. I mean, I'm down for getting buck wild just like anybody else, but this wasn't that. It was ripping my clothes off, me saying, 'Wait! No! Don't! Stop! What are you doing?'"

Scott says that she didn't realize what had occurred until she was recently writing in her journal.

Scott credits her husband of three years, Lyzel Williams, for helping her: "He's a genuine person with a huge heart. And the way he loves me is just ridiculous."

Udipke's book find

John Udipke, like many a good book-lover, found the cellar of his house and shelves in his barn were being overrun with books he and his wife have collected over the years.

"They were just collecting dust and mouse droppings," the author told *The Boston Globe* in Friday's edition.

Their solution? Find someone who would pay for the used books, and haul them away.

"I'm at an age when you think about lightning your load, rather than dumping it on your heirs," said Udipke, 72, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner.

Mark Stolle, owner of Manchester by the Book store, bought Udipke's collection.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

A celebrity Christmas list

One columnist has a few ideas on what to get for those naughty Hollywood stars (and a few of the nice ones)

BY LUIAINE LEE

Scripps Howard News Service

It's that time of year again, time to think of Christmas wishes you'd give the stars you've met during the year if you could.

Julia Roberts already received her Christmas package with the birth of twins. Being a mother will probably provide the gift she most needs: a little humility. A blubbery waistline, a touch of cold, double 2 o'clock feedings, loads of dirty diapers — all that should conspire to make Julia a little less contrary.

For Angelina Jolie, a fine present would be a decent husband-father to go with the new-found mother in her.

How about a wedding ring for Goldie Hawn, a teething ring for Nicolas Cage's new wife, and for Tom Hanks, a role that takes him beyond his endless goodwill into a tougher dimension? A healthy physique wouldn't be amiss for Renee Zellweger, instead of the emaciated one she pursues when she finishes with plump little "Bridget Jones."

Jennifer Connolly could use some Milk Duds and a McDonald's gift certificate.

Outlawing the toxic Botox would be a dandy donation to Hollywood's entire feminine contingent, and how about a bottle of mouthwash for Colin Farrell and a one-way ticket back to Australia for Russell Crowe? The gift of silence would be the best thing for Tommy Lee Jones, who can't open his mouth without berating someone. And for Jack Nicholson, a portrayal that does not depend on the Good Ol' Boy persona to get him through.

We could siphon off some great roles for underrated actors like Jeffrey Donovan, Don Johnson, Jeff Bridges, Bonnie Bedelia, Dana Delany, Tony Goldwyn and David Paymer.

A trip to India with meditation on the mount might be just the ticket for Helen Hunt, and for Alec Baldwin, a seat in local government.

For David Duchovny, a role that matches his stout intellect, and for director Wes Craven, a movie that wasn't a single scream in it.

A welcome gift might

be an extra nanny for Jada Pinkett Smith, a better taxi show for John McEnroe, funnier guests for Ellen DeGeneres and early retirement for David Letterman.

And for the nation's desperate housewives, how about a hunky 2005 calendar featuring Josh Duhamel, Michael Weatherly, Antonio Banderas, Aaron Eckhart, Jude Law, Taye Diggs, Neal McDonough, Hugh Jackman, George Clooney, Daniel Washington, Matthew Fox and Matt Damon — not only gorgeous but good guys in the bargain.

May director Jonathan Frakes find a directing project that lights his afterburners and Oliver Stone find one that doesn't. A song that's No. 2 with a bullet for Neil Sedaka, heated vocal cords for Julie Andrews and an Emmy for Geoffrey Rush's phenomenal performance as Peter Sellers.

Tropical islands with no e-mails for retiring chief Sheri Lansing and Alexander Payne's next script for her husband, director Billy Friedkin.

May CBS get a clue, Dan Rather get a civilian job and FX find another "Nip/Tuck."

The best gift for Dakota Fanning would be a childhood, and for Britney Spears, adulthood.

For Michael Eisner, the job of CEO at Pixar, and for Roy Disney, the return of defecting animators to the fold.

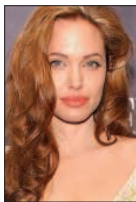
It would be a charitable gift if reality shows would get real and fictional drama would come out of hiding.

For the gang at "MadTV," how about a broadcast network gig, and the folks at "Saturday Night Live," a berth on cable for John Goodman, a FUNNY sitcom for Stephen Bocho (who's defecting to cable), may network censors be a remembrance of things past.

The best gift for "Jack and Bobby" would be a third season.

For Meg Ryan, how about some of the roles that go to Nicole Kidman? And for Showtime, some of the respect that always goes to HBO.

Renee Zellweger may want to seek out a happy medium for her body, somewhere between Bridget Jones and skinny as a rail.



Angelina Jolie might consider asking for a new man this Christmas.

KRT

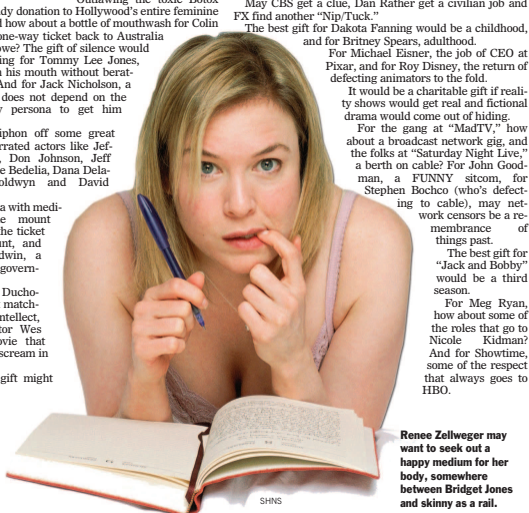


Tom Hanks may like to find a few fresh roles under the tree this year.

AP



Jean



SHS

YOUR MONEY

Find that one great gift idea

Perfect present bears repeating

BY BELLE ELVING
AND LIZ SEYMOUR
The Washington Post

We once heard of a woman who gave almost everyone on her Christmas list a pair of cashmere socks: Little booties for a friend's baby, pink-striped knee-highs for a girl's niece, impeccable argyle-socks for a button-down brother, better-than-another-shawl for granny.

Her strategy may have lacked variety, but you've got to applaud its universality. The most time-consuming part of holiday shopping is figuring out what to give and where to get it. But settle on something like cashmere socks — what's not to like? — and you're halfway home.

So that's what we've looked to include in this annual gift guide. A one-size-fits-all solution to last-minute shopping. Gifts that mix practicality almost anyone would appreciate with charm no one could resist.

Have fun with this strategy. Giving one rubber spatula would be weird, but a bright bouquet of them in all shapes and sizes is wonderful. Our suggestions can be found in lists, in many styles and at a range of prices. So even if you haven't started shopping, here's a way to get your list all wrapped up.

We couldn't resist suggesting a



A one great idea fits all solution to last-minute shopping: Clockwise from top, a rearview desk mirror, cord organizer and door stop.

few small gifts that may seem more functional than festive. But for the hard-core home-obsessed, these items could be one of the best surprises under the tree.

1. Colors, coordinated: Help her on the compulsive quest for the perfect shade of sage by buying her a complete paint fan deck of all the colors from her favorite company. Many paint stores and hardware stores will sell them, for about \$15 to \$20.

2. Perfect measurements: Anyone wanting to hang a picture, put up a towel rack or figure out if the couch will fit would appreciate a quality tape measure. A perfect gift for the new homeowner or first-time apartment dweller.

3. Put a stop to it: A door that sneakily swings shut as soon as you open it is one household an-

noyance that's easy to fix: The charming rubber pup pictured above, spotted at the Container Store for \$3.99, keeps any door in place.

4. Looking backward: A desk that faces away from the door is supposedly bad feng shui. Put things right in a home office with this rearview mirror that affixes to a computer monitor so you can see what's going on behind your back. Sold at the Container Store for \$9.99.

5. Major cords: A snarl of wires under the desk or behind the TV? Help a neatnik get things straight with a cheerful little cable turtle that won a spot in the Museum of Modern Art's design collection. Widely available at home and office supply stores; this one pictured above is \$6.99 at the Container Store.

LATWP

Ignore spammers and maybe they'll go away

BY JOHN MORAN
The Hartford (Conn.) Courant

All the traditional signs of the holiday season are here: the festive lights, the busy stores and the crush of spam in your e-mail.

Yes, said to that, the onslaught of junk e-mail has booties the list of holiday hallmarks.

Spam is, of course, a year-round phenomenon. But it unquestionably accelerates each November and continues right into the new year.

Much of consumers' annual retail spending takes place during this holiday shopping spree. Clearly, the junk e-mailers want their share.

You might think people wouldn't need to be warned against these solicitations. But they do. So, as a public service, I urge you: Never buy anything advertised via unsolicited commercial e-mail.

Anyone who would pollute your inbox illegally is surely capable of ripping you off, too.

Everything about these advertisements screams scam, swindle and con job. You'll probably get nothing for your money. If you get anything at all, it's likely to be some cheap trinket, a mere shadow of what you thought you were buying.

Worse still, you might discover that the e-mail "sale" was actually a thinly veiled excuse to pilfer your credit card number.

You'll figure that out when mysterious charges for things you never bought start turning

up on your credit-card statement.

And let's face it, the only reason anyone sends spam is the hope that a few suckers will respond. Every time someone does, it encourages future blasts of millions of junk e-mails.

In time, some of the big guns fighting spam — large, wealthy and tech-savvy corporations like America Online and Microsoft — might make progress against rogue spammers.

Meanwhile, it's up to Internet users to help stop spam by never responding to it. Don't even open it. Just delete it instead.

That is, naturally, a nasty chore. Fortunately, there is automated assistance available for a reasonable cost. The number of anti-spam software programs available to help filter your incoming mail is large and growing.

Norton Antispy (\$39.95) and McAfee SpamKiller (\$39.95) are two of the best-known products in the market. But they're also faced with a host of worthy competitors, including MailFrontier Desktop (\$29.95), Qurb Anti-Spam (\$29.95) and Anti-Spam EmailGuard (\$19.95).

Most have free trials available for download if you'd like to take them for a test drive before buying. If spam's getting to you down, they're worth checking out.

But whatever you do, don't buy them if they're advertised by e-mail.

To our readers

Jim Coates is on medical leave. His computer advice column will return in several weeks.

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

Gift card reminders

BY NANCY DUNNAN

We're coming up on holiday season, a time when many of us give cards on our holiday list a gift card.

They seem like the ideal present — a no-brainer in a way. You don't need to know your niece, nephew or friend's favorite color or what size sweater they wear and the lucky recipient gets to pick out his or her favorite thing.

All true, but make sure the gift card you purchase:

■ Does not expire. Some cards become inactive after a certain number of months. Others come with monthly "inactivity charges" during the time period they are not used.

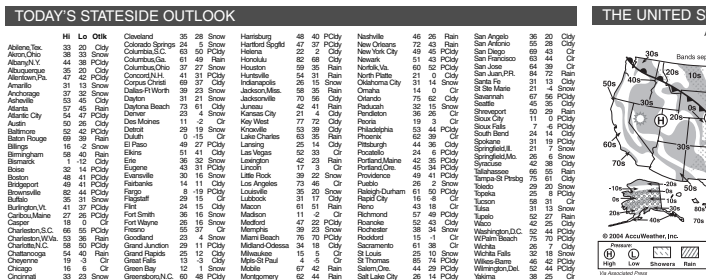
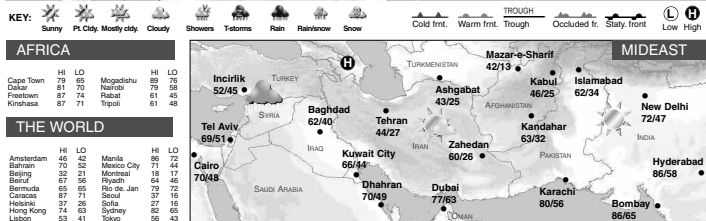
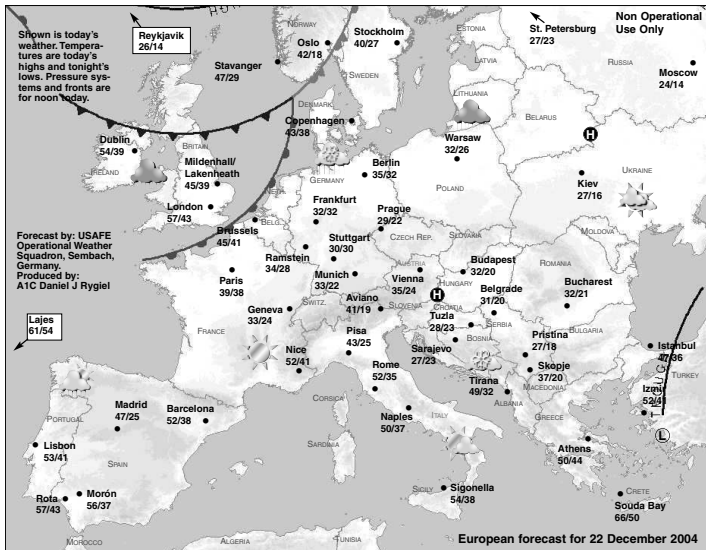
■ Can be replaced. You want to deal with a retailer that will issue a new card should the original be lost.

Financial adviser, economist and security analyst Nancy Dunnan is the author of "How to Invest \$50 to \$500,000." She writes a weekly column for theonlineinvestor.com.

MONDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES				
	52-week High	Low	Net Change	% YTD 52-week High
Dow Jones Industrial	10,611.69	10,561.00	+11.69	+1.1
Dow Jones Transportation	3,770.58	2,743.46	-30.19	-0.8
Dow Jones Utilities	252.56	254.11	+1.55	+0.6
NASDAQ Composite	6,171.85	6,171.85	+1.83	+0.0
NYSE Composite	1,417.41	1,118.26	+5.38	+0.5
Nasdaq Composite	2,117.17	1,750.82	-7.35	-0.3
S&P 500	1,207.97	1,090.72	+4.65	+0.4
S&P 500 MidCap	546.29	546.29	+0.45	+0.1
Russell 2000	684.81	515.90	+6.95	+1.3
Volatility Index	11.30	10.58	-0.72	-6.3

NYSE				AMEX				NASDAQ			
Most Active (\$1 or more)				Most Active (\$1 or more)				Most Active (\$1 or more)			
Name	Vol	%Ch	Last	Name	Vol	%Ch	Last	Name	Vol	%Ch	Last
Apple	1161620	+2.90	-1.46	SPDR	438312	+15.47	+43	SPY	1079740	-7.97	+29
Microsoft	982609	3.82	+	SENSEX	214282	32.21	+	Nasdaq100	898989	30.20	-28
Amazon.com	948000	1.00	+	GoldMin	194000	10.00	+	SPDR	898989	30.20	-28
North Hill	138364	-0.41	-.08	Dow Jones	194000	10.00	+	Pharmas	898989	30.20	-28
Google	138364	-0.41	-.08	SPDR	194000	10.00	+	Pharmas	898989	30.20	-28
Genetec	109711	37.11	+	HSK	98211	12.29	+18	SPDR	898989	30.20	-28
IBM	109711	37.11	+	Shibor	98211	12.29	+18	SPDR	898989	30.20	-28
ExxonMobil	102377	31.06	+1.26	IBM	42384	2.20	+0.4	Intel	561784	19.56	+86
Twitter	141851	19.40	+	S&P 500	36175	11.17	+.49	Sumitomo	288652	5.18	-.65
Verizon	141851	19.40	+.18	S&P 500	29206	20.36	+.41	Veritas	288652	5.18	-.65



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Cloudy skies with snow/rain. Highs in the 30s.

Britain, Ireland: Cloudy skies with rain showers. Highs in the mid 40s to upper 50s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Cloudy skies with morning fog and isolated snow becoming mostly cloudy in the afternoon. Highs in the upper 20s.

France: Sunny skies in the east and cloudy skies in the west with isolated rain showers. Highs in the upper 30s to low 50s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain/snow showers and morning fog. Highs in the mid to upper 30s.

Southern Germany: Partly cloudy skies becoming cloudy with snow in the afternoon. Highs in the low to mid 30s.

Hungary: Partly cloudy skies. Highs in the low 30s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy skies. Highs in the upper 30s to low 40s.

Southern Italy: Partly to mostly cloudy skies. Highs in the low 50s.

Kosovo: Cloudy skies with morning snow and dense fog becoming mostly cloudy in the afternoon. Highs in the upper 20s.

Norway: Cloudy skies with rain/snow. Highs in the 40s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy skies with isolated morning rain showers. Highs in the upper 40s to mid 50s.

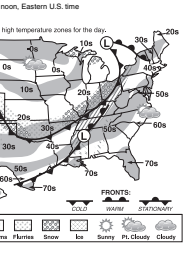
Turkey: Mostly cloudy to cloudy skies with rain/snow showers and isolated thunderstorms to the west. Highs in the 40s to low 50s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAFE Operational Weather Squadron home page at: <https://ows.sembach.af.mil> <http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil>

SUN & MOON



THE UNITED STATES TODAY



Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS & STRIPES.
Your Hometown Newspaper

Scheduled to **ETS** or **PCS**?

Horoscope

Time is the most valuable commodity. We can't waste it vacillating, holding out for an upgrade or haggling for the best price — too many practical actions must be taken in the next few days. Mercury projecting forward helps us do the same without encumbrance. Earth-sign influences bring thought, emotion and deal together as one.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 22). Risks pay off huge this year! In the next four weeks, run — don't walk — to invest in education or equipment that could change your work and financial luck. Old loves return, and family reunions are healing in February. A whirlwind romance in the middle of spring makes you feel irresistible. But don't make hasty decisions.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). The more money you make, the better you feel — but is that right? Self-worth is not to be confused with net worth. Try and see all your contributions to the world as valuable, not just the ones that bring home dollar signs.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). When your mind is uncluttered by emotional thoughts, you're brilliant. Either eliminate upsetting influences or decide not to be upset by them. Romance can be found in your very own neighborhood.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). There's no shortage of stress these days. Make "Health first" your motto. When your physical body is in balance, you can go about the business of doing everything you want yourself you're going to do.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Motivating yourself is tricky business. When there's something you are loathe to do, all those less-than-loathsome tasks suddenly seem like gray! This is how papers get filed and clothes get folded.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The darning of your world pulls a less-than-daring maneuver. Should you be quick to forgive? Not before you fully understand the motivation

behind this action. Do more investigating.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). A friend tries to help you but may be unequalled for what it is you need. Flight now, it's better to rely on people for what they are already good at. Get more specific about your expectations, and then, put the word out.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). If you're not going to make a profit, you may as well not make a profit while slacking in front of the TV instead of working your fingers to the bone! An expert strategy ensures you're working both smart

and hard.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You don't want to be the exception to every rule; you just are. Accept your special status instead of trying to fit into the norm. Later, you'll learn that what you're now calling the "norm" is about as wacky as it gets.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). People are depending on you. Don't even think about calling in sick — you're definitely the brains of your team now. If it weren't for you, the whole operation might temporarily shut down.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You're definitely on the minds of many. Friends drop by, and people call out the blue. Initially, you could be flustered — you hate to be caught unaware. In retrospect, you'll be happy you took time out to chat.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your ultimate goal is only unattainable until you begin to pursue it. Someone powerful has a crush on you. Enjoy the boost to your ego, but don't feel you have to do something about it.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Finances depend on how innovative you can be. Satisfied customers come to the fore. Encourage people to put their good comments in writing. Testimonials could help you move to the next level in your business.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



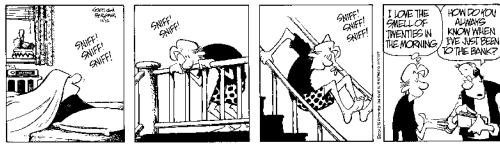
Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



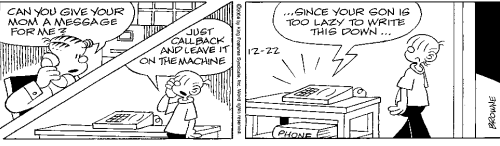
Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



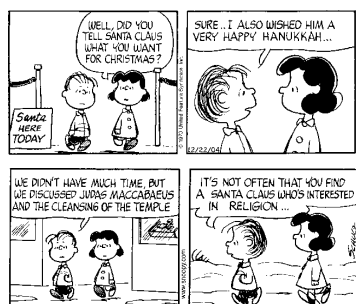
Red Rover



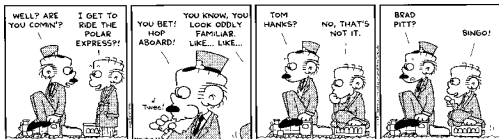
Better or Worse



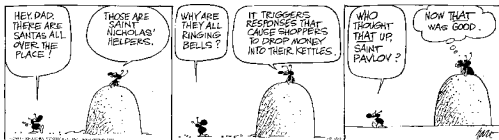
Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



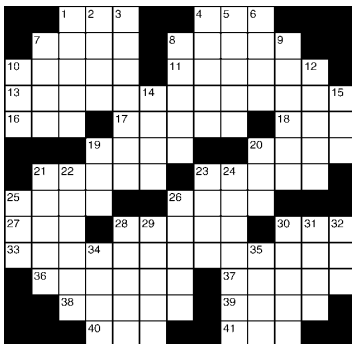
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Sylvester or Stimp
- 4 — Speedwagon
- 7 Relaxation
- 8 Toss choice
- 10 Wisen, maybe
- 11 Motor
- 13 Information distribution center
- 16 Make lace
- 17 Plus-column entry
- 18 Pontiac letters
- 19 Categorize
- 20 Singer Campbell
- 21 Teatime treat
- 23 Shakespeare's output

Down

- 1 West Pointer
- 2 On the Mediterranean
- 3 Lay of the land
- 4 Gamut
- 5 Square dance group
- 6 Medley
- 7 Big name in scat
- 8 Nervous
- 9 With little leeway
- 10 Halloween abbr.
- 12 Sen. Kefauver
- 14 Capri, e.g.
- 15 West expanse of time
- 19 Supporting

20 "Sleepy Time —"

- 21 One's performances
- 22 Witty folks
- 23 Vintage videogame
- 24 Match alternative
- 25 French nobleman
- 26 "Lather, —, repeat"
- 28 Fancy riddle
- 29 Use handily
- 30 Self-reproach
- 31 Catch sight of
- 32 Ball-bearing item
- 34 Peacekeeping alliance
- 35 Sandwich snack

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-22

CRYPTOQUIP

W JGY'P UAUF MEFFZ
 EFGHYJ MGWYX. W RHUXX
 ZGH KWRVP XEZ W'K

E A U F X U P G M V E Y R U
 Yesterday's Cryptquip: I HEARD OF A FINE CARPENTER WHO PROUDLY SAID "ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MY SHELF!"

Today's Cryptquip Clue: F equals R

Porn habit requires counseling

Confidential to my readers: Although I know you're busy beyond belief preparing for the holidays, please take a minute to go to your computers and send greetings to our troops. This is the loneliest time of the year for these brave young men and women, many of whom are away from their families for the first time. Type in **www.OperationDear Abby.com** and let them know we care.

Dear Abby: I have been married for 10 years. I have always had fantasies about exposing my wife naked to other men. "Hazel" is a deep sleeper, and in college, I exposed her countless times for my roommates to see. (I pretended to be asleep.) From the time we were married, I took pictures of her while she slept. I posted a good number of them on Internet porn sites, making no attempt to blur her face, which would have

Dear Abby



ruined it for me. I saved each porn site photo spread of her into a file on my computer.

Well, my wife found the file. We are now in marriage counseling, but I still have the fantasies. I know what I did was wrong, but I did it anyway. I don't want to lose my wife. Please help.

—Ashamed in Virginia
Dear Ashamed: You need more help than I can give you in a letter. You violated your wife's trust, treated her like an object, and while I applaud the fact that you are getting marriage counseling, counseling of a different sort is also in order. Please ask your doctor for a referral to a psychiatrist ASAP.

Dear Abby: My co-worker has planned his own retirement dinner party at \$45 a head, including tax and gratuity. That might not be much to managers and supervisors who

receive large salaries, but for those of us who don't, that's a lot of money. What's ironic is he expects an additional \$10 from each of us for a gift.

A luncheon date for 50 percent of the staff had already been confirmed. However, yesterday a flier was distributed announcing a dinner on the same date the luncheon was canceled. Our lunch date was scheduled without consulting us.

We asked him to reschedule the lunch, told him the dinner party was too expensive, and asked if he would make the \$10 gift optional. Are we unreasonable, or is he?

—Wondering in San Francisco
Dear Wondering: Wonder no more. He is. Please don't allow yourselves to be manipulated into spending more than you can afford on this anything BUT shy and retiring co-worker.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69404, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.ueppress.com/dearabby> Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles. One letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

YIEPT
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

OPSOW
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

ANZATS
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

USDABE
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Ans: □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Yesterday's

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

THE

(Answers tomorrow)

Jumbles: SNACK OUTDO SCHOOL GOBLIT
Answer: Good looks can attract these —
GOOD LOOKS

Help cousin find place in new town

Dear Annie: I am 10 years old. My cousin "Zoe," just moved to our town and is going to my school. We're in the same classes, in the same youth group and in the same after-school activities, and we are going to the same summer camp. Zoe is really nice, but we live in a small town, and it can take a while to meet new people. So, she hangs out with my friends and me a lot, and even though I have no problem with that, some of my friends are hinting that they'd like her to leave us alone once in a while.

I love my cousin, but I could use a little breathing room.

—Cousin Problems
Dear Cousin: Can you introduce Zoe to some schoolmates with whom she might have something in common? Perhaps she would like to join a sport or after-school group that doesn't include you. Zoe is still new to your area and needs time to find her own friends and her own

Annie's Mailbox



interests. She is relying on you to make the transition easier, so try to be patient with her. You won't regret it.

Dear Annie: I've heard people complain about the overblown Christmas newsletters they receive. You know what I'm talking about — the husband got his third promotion, the son was offered a full scholarship to Harvard, the daughter was voted homecoming queen, the 9-year-old plays three musical instruments, the oldest daughter married an ambassador, the first grandchild is a genius who already speaks three languages. So here's my Christmas Letter Revenge. I hope you will print it.

—Had Enough of That
Dear Had Enough: Thanks for a good chuckle.

Here it is:
Dear Everybody: Once again, the happy holidays are upon us. We have so many things to appreciate. Bob got a promotion to

french fry specialist at the fast-food joint, so we were able to purchase two more buckets at the flea market. We now have enough for all the holes in the leaking roof. We've actually collected so much water that we can flush the toilets every day.

The Peds found this year's marijuana crop before we could harvest it all, but we should make it through the winter with the profits from the still. Jimmy got out on good behavior just in time for Christmas and the birth of his fifth child. Fortunately, all four mothers have stopped fighting over him. Junior ran off again, and it gets harder and harder to get the sheriff to look for him. Just because he's 35 doesn't mean he can take care of himself.

I hope that the holidays find you whole and happy.

—Bertha Mae, Bob, Jimmy, Junior and all the Grandkids

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



12-22

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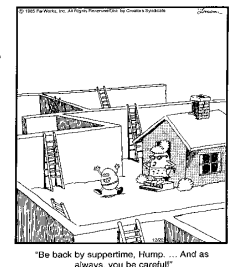
"Sorry, we don't have a pear tree."



Dennis the Menace



The Far Side



Non Sequitur



SCOREBOARD

Baseball & Radio

Wednesday

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—NBA: Dallas at New York (td).

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—College basketball: Texas Tech at Iowa (td).

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—College basketball: UCLA at Michigan (td).

AFN-Sports, 7 p.m.—Golf: PGA Tour Season Review Special (td).

AFN-Sports, 7 p.m.—College football: Chicago Sports Bowl, Syracuse vs. Georgia Tech (td).

Thursday

AFN-Atlantic, 2 a.m.—College football: Ohio State at Miami (td).

AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.—College basketball: Illinois at San Diego State (td).

AFN-Sports, 4 a.m.—Pro basketball: Milwaukee at Boston (td).

AFN-Sports, 1 p.m.—College football: Ohio State at Miami (td).

AFN-Sports, 6 p.m.—Pro football: NFL Films Game of the Week (td).

AFN-Sports, 6 p.m.—Pro basketball: Denver at New York (td).

Friday

AFN-Radio, 12:30 a.m.—College football: Fort Worth Bowl, Cincinnati vs. Marshall.

AFN-Radio, 12:30 a.m.—College basketball: Richmond at Pittsburgh.

AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.—College basketball: Minnesota at San Antonio.

AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.—College football: Providence at Memphis.

AFN-Radio, 4:30 a.m.—College football: Pioneer Pure Vision Bowl, UCLA vs. Wyoming.

AFN-Sports, 4:30 a.m.—Pro basketball: Miami at Sacramento.

All Times Central European Time; dt indicates delayed broadcast. All listings are subject to change. Visit www.afn.net for more information.

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press men's college basketball poll, with the number of votes in parentheses, receive through Dec. 15, total points based on 25 votes for a first-place vote through one vote for a 25th-place vote and last week's ranking.

Record	Pts	Pvs
1. Illinois (50)	7	1,058
2. Kansas (15)	7	1,058
3. North Carolina (15)	7	1,058
4. Duke (8)	1,058	1,058
5. Syracuse (8)	1,058	1,058
6. Georgetown (8)	1,058	1,058
7. Georgia Tech (8)	1,058	1,058
8. Pittsburgh (8)	1,058	1,058
9. Connecticut (8)	1,058	1,058
10. Gonzaga (8)	1,058	1,058
11. Indiana (8)	1,058	1,058
12. Texas (8)	1,058	1,058
13. Virginia (8)	1,058	1,058
14. North Carolina (8)	1,058	1,058
15. Alabama (8)	1,058	1,058
16. Georgia Washington (8)	1,058	1,058
17. Mississippi State (8)	1,058	1,058
18. Cincinnati (8)	1,058	1,058
19. Michigan State (8)	1,058	1,058
20. Maryland (8)	1,058	1,058
21. Virginia (8)	1,058	1,058
22. North Carolina (8)	1,058	1,058
23. Alabama (8)	1,058	1,058
24. Georgia Washington (8)	1,058	1,058
25. Mississippi State (8)	1,058	1,058

Others receiving votes: Marquette, 9; Boston College, 9; Wisconsin, 9; Oklahoma, 15; New Mexico, 13; Arkansas, 12; Oregon, 11; Kansas State, 10; Old Dominion, 10; American, 10; West Virginia, 4; Miami, 3; Texas, 2; Fresno State, 2; Old Dominion, 2; American, 2; 1, Texas A&M, 3; Ohio State, 1.

Men's Top 25 schedule

Tuesday's games

No. 3 Oklahoma State vs. Northwestern

No. 4 North Carolina vs. Vermont

No. 15 Gonzaga vs. E. Washington at Spokane Arena

No. 14 Arizona vs. Manhattan

No. 16 North Carolina State vs. Brigham Young

No. 17 Iowa vs. Texas Tech at the United Center

No. 18 Louisville vs. Indiana-Purdue-Indiana

No. 23 Michigan State vs. UCLA

Wednesday's games

No. 1 Illinois vs. Missouri at the Savvis Center, St. Louis

No. 2 Wake Forest vs. Wisconsin-Milwaukee at Kemper Arena

No. 7 Syracuse vs. Rice

No. 6 Kentucky vs. William & Mary

No. 9 Georgia Tech vs. Charleston Southern

No. 11 Connecticut vs. Sacred Heart at the Hartford Civic Center

No. 12 Washington vs. Central Conn. St. at the Hartford Civic Center

No. 15 Texas vs. Arkansas

No. 18 Louisville vs. New Orleans at Austin Play

No. 14 Arizona vs. Texas A&M at Austin Play

No. 21 Mississippi St. vs. Jacksonville St. at Mississippi Coliseum, Jackson, Miss.

No. 22 Cincinnati vs. Miami

Thursday's games

No. 10 Pittsburgh vs. Richmond

No. 20 Georgia Washington at Florida International

No. 24 Maryland vs. American

No. 25 Virginia vs. Loyola Marymount

Friday's games

No. 12 Washington vs. Houston

Saturday's games

No games scheduled

Sunday's games

No games scheduled

Monday's men's scores

EAST

Bryant vs. Holy Family 70-52

Dayton vs. Miami 77-67

Edinboro vs. Bloomsburg 87-67

Elizabeth vs. Neumann 76-67

Kentucky Western vs. Missouri St. Louis 63-52

Niagara 111, 52, Bonaventure 75

Tulsa 75, 60, Belmont 62

St. Anselm 69, Caldwell 47

Syracuse 82, Cornell 61

Temple 48, Princeton 47

Procter & Kean 70, Pennsylvania, Pa. 79

Yeshiva 80, CCNY 60

SOUTH

Dayton 74, Delaware 46

Clarkson 80, Savannah 54

Delaware 56, Jacksonville 54

Delaware 56, Jacksonville 54

Florida Southern 70, Olivet Nazarene 57

Kentucky Western 76, Missouri St. Louis 63

Louisiana Tech 64, Memphis 55

Louisiana-Lafayette 67, Georgia St. 50

Louisiana-Monroe 75, Southern 50

Middle Tennessee 70, Toledo 65

Mississippi St. 104, Florida A&M 80

N.C. Central 81, Queens, N.Y. 67

Old Dominion 69, Virginia 57

South Carolina 77, East Carolina 57

South Carolina 77, East Carolina 57

Southern Miss. 67, Southern Alabama 60

Tennessee 77, Belmont 68

UNC-Greensboro 81, Mississippi 64

Vanderbilt 86, Cent. Michigan 54

Cincinnati vs. Jackson 57-43

Detroit 88, Michigan 83

Milwaukee 81, DePaul 76

North Carolina 77, Virginia 57

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12. Texas Tech 6-2 553 12

13. Minnesota 6-2 553 12

14. Baylor 6-2 553 12

15. Georgia 6-2 553 12

16. Kentucky 6-2 553 12

17. Maryland 6-2 553 12

18. DePaul 6-2 553 12

19. Purdue 6-2 553 12

20. Kansas St. 6-2 553 12

21. Kansas St. 6-2 553 12

22. Utah 8-2 71 --

Others receiving votes: Arizona 45, New Mexico 45, Arizona 45, Richmond 45

State 24, Oregon 24, Illinois 22, Villanova 18

Tulsa 16, Iowa 10, Temple 8, Virginia Tech

West Virginia 8, Wake Forest 6, Florida St.

Nebraska 15, TCU 5, Auburn 4, Charlotte

Chattanooga 2, Wisc.-Green Bay 2

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TOURNAMENTS

Turner Classic

First Round

Glennville 54, Fort Valley 7, 49

Shawnee 74, Kentucky 65, 2

Fun in the Sun Shootout

Championship

Oral Roberts 89, UMKC 52

Third Place

Kentucky 84, Memphis 64

Final

Pepperdine 79, Wright St. 70

Vanderbilt 86, BYU 47

Mississippi State Classic

Mississippi St. 81, Louisiana-Monroe 50

San Jose St. 65, Grambling 56

Charlotte 88, Puerto Rico-Mayaguez 43

Towson 55, Fordham 51

Northwestern 66, N. Iowa 58

Towson 55, Toledo 51

Utah 77, Utah Valley 70

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Orlando Cabrera, above, who helped the Boston Red Sox win their first World Series title since 1918 this season, became expendable when the Red Sox signed free-agent shortstop Edgar Renteria last week.

Cabrera going to Angels; Miller might leave Astros

BY RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Orlando Cabrera is joining the Anaheim Angels, and Wade Miller could be leaving the Houston Astros.

On a busy day of deals among players eligible for salary arbitration, Anaheim agreed to a \$32 million, four-year contract with Cabrera. And Miller became a free agent when Houston failed to offer him a 2005 contract by Monday's midnight deadline.

Also, Minnesota outfielder Jacques Jones agreed to a \$5 million, one-year contract, and Toronto right-hander Justin Speier got a \$4.15 million, two-year agreement.

Forty-one players on rosters weren't offered contracts by the deadline and became free agents. The group included Josh Phelps of Cleveland, Eric Munson of Detroit, Scott Schoeneweis of the Chicago White Sox and Alex Cora of Los Angeles.

Among players already free agents, two left-handed relievers agreed to two-year contracts, with Steve Kline getting \$5.5 million from Baltimore and Kent Mercker \$2.6 million from Cincinnati. Los Angeles finalized a \$4 million, two-year deal with left-hander Wilson Alvarez and a \$3.5 million, one-year contract with infielder Jose Valentin. Texas completed its \$1.8 million, two-year deal to re-sign outfielder David Dellucci.

On the trade front, San Diego acquired outfielder Dave Roberts from Boston for outfielder Jay Payton, infielder Ramon Vazquez, minor league right-hander David Pauley and \$2.65 million.

"This is a dream come true," said Roberts, who has lived in San Diego County since he was 12. "After winning the World Series you don't think it can get any better, but it has."

Cabrera replaces spunky shortstop David Eckstein, who wasn't offered a contract by the Angels. Cabrera was dealt from the Montreal Expos to Boston in July and helped the Red Sox win their first

Baseball roundup

World Series since 1918

"He's a guy who can hit the ball out of the park, and he can run, too," said Angels General Manager Bill Stoneman, a former Expos executive. "He should give us some more range than David gave us, and a better arm from that position."

Boston replaced Cabrera last week with two-time Gold Glove winner Edgar Renteria, who left St. Louis to accept a \$40 million, four-year offer from the Red Sox.

Miller, who made \$3.4 million last year, was 7-7 with a 3.35 ERA in 15 starts before a rotator cuff injury sidelined him for the season on June 26. At the time, the right-hander said he thought rest would cure the problem and that he could avoid surgery.

Jones, known for excellent defense, hit .354 with 24 homers and 80 RBIs. The Twins also agreed to one-year deals with second baseman Luis Rivas (\$1,625,000) and designated hitter Matthew LeCroy (\$750,000).

Others who agreed to one-year contracts were: Cleveland second baseman Ronnie Belliard (\$3 million), Cincinnati infielder D'Angelo Jimenez (\$2.87 million), Baltimore outfielder Jay Gibbons (\$2.6 million) and pitcher Bruce Chen (\$550,000). Oakland right-hander Chad Bradford (\$1.4 million) and second baseman Mark Ellis (\$400,000). Detroit outfielder Alex Sanchez and catcher Brandon Inge (\$1.35 million each). Expos left-hander Joey Eischen (\$1.04 million) and right-hander T.J. Tucker (\$657,000). Pittsburgh first baseman Daryle Ward (\$890,000). Chicago Cubs infielder Jose Macias (\$825,000). New York Mets catcher Vance Wilson (\$760,000). Philadelphia left-hander Aaron Lultz (\$550,000). Los Angeles infielder Olmedo Sanchez (\$650,000) and pitcher Giovanni Carrara (\$550,000). Toronto infielder John McDonald (\$400,000); and St. Louis pitcher Mike Lincoln (\$360,000).

BY RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The three teams in the proposed trade that would send Randy Johnson from Arizona to the New York Yankees signed off on the deal and submitted it to baseball Commissioner Bud Selig for approval.

Paperwork for the deal, which also involves the Los Angeles Dodgers, was sent to Selig at about 2 a.m. Tuesday, two people involved in the complex talks said on the condition of anonymity.

Selig's approval is necessary because more than \$1 million will change hands. The Dodgers are sending the Yankees the money to pay part of left-hander Kazuhiro Ishii's salary.

Once Selig approves, New York

wants a 72-hour window to negotiate a contract extension with Johnson. The five-time Cy Young Award winner is owed \$16 million in the last year of his contract.

Los Angeles would receive right-hander Javier Vazquez from the Yankees along with two top prospects, catcher Dioner Navarro and third baseman Eric Duncan, and the Dodgers would get pitcher Mike Kopechne from Arizona. Los Angeles might trade Vazquez to another team.

Arizona would get outfielder Shawn Green and pitchers Brad Penny, Yencby Brazoban and Brandon Weeden.

Johnson and Green have no-trade clauses. Johnson wants to play for the Yankees; Green

has not yet waived his right to block a trade.

"I've gone through different stages going back to last Friday," Dodgers General Manager Paul DePodesta said Monday night.

"At times, I thought it was going to be happy and I didn't think it would. We're still on a roller-coaster."

In other Yankees news, free-agent center fielder Carlos Beltran was to meet Yankees owner George Steinbrenner on Tuesday in Tampa, Fla.

Steinbrenner planned to attend the meeting with Yankees President Randy Levine and General Manager Brian Cashman.

Beltran finished the season with the Houston Astros, who would like to re-sign him. It's also possible that the Chicago Cubs and Dodgers could pursue him.

Agreement gives Washington chance to save deal with MLB

BY BRETT ZONKGER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Major League Baseball in the nation's capital may not be dead, after all. After a day of negotiations among the mayor's office, baseball officials and the head of the District of Columbia city council, government leaders announced an agreement Monday night they said would revive a deal to move baseball's Montreal Expos to Washington.

The council was to vote on the revised package Tuesday.

The compromise reached by Mayor Anthony A. Williams, D.C. Council Chairman Linda W. Cropp and baseball officials allowed private financing for a 41,000-seat stadium on the An-

costia River south of the Capitol but would eliminate a provision vowing the deal if private financing isn't found.

Estimates for the project, which includes land acquisition, street improvements, infrastructure upgrades and refurbishing RFK Stadium, start at \$435 million.

The revised deal also splits the liability for cost overruns and missed construction deadlines evenly between the city and Major League Baseball, Williams spokesman Chris Bender said.

Last week, the council approved a Cropp-sponsored requirement that private money cover at least half the cost of actual stadium construction, now estimated at \$249 million. Baseball rejected that provision and halted

promotional, marketing and sales operations for the team, which would be renamed the Nationals.

The city faces a Dec. 31 deadline to have a financing plan in place consistent with the September agreement signed by the team and Williams.

Under the accord, Williams' office would keep the council informed of all private financing proposals it receives. In return, Cropp agreed to drop the provision she inserted last week that would void the deal if the city couldn't find private financing.

"We remain hopeful that the council will pass legislation consistent with the stadium agreement so we can move forward with the Nationals in D.C.," said Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer, who negotiated by telephone from New York.

Crew coach Andrulis gets new deal

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Columbus Crew coach Greg Andrulis will return next season, agreeing to a new contract Monday.

The 46-year-old Andrulis was the league's coach of the year, leading the team to a 12-5-13 record. The Crew lost in total goals to the New England Revolution in the two-game Eastern Conference semifinals.

Andrulis became head coach of the Crew six games into the 2001 season.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Price's 17-year run in top 50 of world golf ranking ends

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Nick Price of Zimbabwe slipped to No. 51 in the final world ranking of 2004, ending the most remarkable run since the official

world ranking began in 1986.

Price had been in the top 50 for 17 consecutive years dating to 1987.

Greg Norman did it for 15 consecutive years.

The longest active streak — 14 years — now belongs to Davis Love III, who ended the year at No. 7.

Grandi wins second giant slam in three days

FLACHAU, Austria — Canadian Thomas Grandi won his second World Cup giant slam in three days Tuesday, while American Bode Miller extended his lead in the overall standings with a third-place finish.

Grandi overtook first-round

leader Didier Chaze of Switzerland in a superb slalom, finishing in a combined two-leg time of 2 minutes, 15.90 seconds.

Miller stretched his World Cup lead over second-place Benjamin Raich to 352 points.

Gerg wins women's super-G

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland — German veteran Ingrid Gerg finally won a race on the course that has given her nothing but fits.

Gerg took the super giant slalom Tuesday for her 20th World Cup victory, completing the Engiadina course in 1 minute, 14.95 seconds, for her second win this season and first at the posh Swiss resort.

American Lindsey Kildow dropped to second after Gerg overtook her, finishing in 1:16.02. Canadian Maria Riesch, making a stunning comeback from injury, was third in 1:15.40.

Majerus decides he'd be shortchanging USC

Coach cites health concerns as reason for quickly backing out of job

BY KEN PETERS

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — At the time, it seemed like a great idea.

Then, Rick Majerus thought it through.

After making a snap decision to take the Southern California coaching job last week, Majerus almost as quickly decided he shouldn't.

"Maybe you're married and Jennifer Aniston walks by and she says, 'C'mon, let's go,'" Majerus said, trying to draw a parallel with what he described as being blinded by the dream opportunity to coach the Trojans' basketball team.

Majerus apologized to the school, athletic director Mike Gar-

rett and associate athletic director Daryl Gross on Monday in the room where he was introduced with much fanfare last Wednesday as the coach who would take over the team on April 1.

"I made a mistake. I'd be doing them a disservice and myself a disservice. Right now, I just can't bring it," a glum Majerus said, citing health concerns as his decision to back out of the job.

Majerus, 56, has had seven heart bypasses and an ongoing battle with his weight, which has been as high as 370 pounds. He also cited health concerns when he retired as Utah's coach last January after 15 seasons, and has been wary of an analogy for ESPN.

He said he decided immediately to take the USC job when he

"I made a mistake. I'd be doing them a disservice and myself a disservice. Right now, I just can't bring it."

Rick Majerus

was offered it on Dec. 13, but had second thoughts as early as last Wednesday night.

"I looked at myself and thought that I was a phony. I realized they weren't getting the guy they hired. I'm not fit enough for this job for my standards. They weren't going to get the guy who puts in 18-hour days," Majerus said.

"I have a fitness issue. It all relates to my weight. I've got a problem. And I'm going to try hard to do something about it. ... I don't want to have a Rick Majerus memorial game."

That's not to say he's had any health problems recently.

"I think my health is good for probably anything other than to be an astronaut or a coach," he said. "I swam a mile and a quarter this morning just because I was so anxiety-ridden."

Assistant Jim Sain, made the interim head coach after Henry Bibby was fired four games into the season, will remain in the post for the rest of this season, Garrett said.

Garrett said the search for a coach will resume, although he has set no timetable.

Majerus, who plans to return to his ESPN job, guided Utah to the NCAA title game in 1998, losing to Kentucky, one of the Utes' 10 NCAA tournament appearances during his tenure.

Considered among the top candidates are Pepperdine coach Paul Westphal, a former USC star, and former Iowa State and Chicago Bulls coach Tim Floyd.



LOS ANGELES TIMES/AP

Rick Majerus announced on Monday he is backing out as Southern California's men's basketball coach less than a week after accepting the position. Majerus said he realized his health wouldn't allow him to put in the long work days he has in the past.

No. 7 Syracuse prevails despite Cornell's 15 threes

The Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Syracuse has 10 wins and just one loss — numbers that don't impress coach Jim Boheim.

The seventh-ranked Orange allowed a Carrier Dome-record 15 three-pointers in an 82-69 victory over Cornell on Monday night.

"If we don't change, it'll be evident to everybody," said Boheim, whose 2-3 zone defense has been the staple of a program that won the 2003 national championship.

"We're just not there," he said. "We can still win a game like this when we don't defend the three, but we're going to come to a time where we can't."

The Orange allowed that many threes only once before — in a 96-92 victory over Southern Illinois in the Midwest Regional semifinals in the 1995 NCAA tournament.

Syracuse was able to beat the Big Red (3-6) for the 28th consecutive time by using a press to force 17 turnovers, 11 on steals, in the second half.

The trick now is for the Orange to play the whole game the way they did the second half.

"We have to play intense," said Hakim Warrick, who had 19 points and 10 rebounds while fighting through double- and triple-teams all game. "The guys that have been here as leaders have to go out there and start the game with intensity and the guys coming off the bench will follow. It's something we have to do — set the tempo."

The last time Cornell beat Syracuse was on Dec. 4, 1968 — or eight years before Boheim became head coach at his alma mater.

Cornell trailed 36-35 at halftime on Monday and was down-

AP Men's Top 25

ing of an upset every time somebody hit from long range.

"We were excited at the end of the first half," said senior guard Cody Topper, who was 7-for-10 from three-point range and had 23 points and seven assists. "We knew we were in the game. We wanted to come out and slow it up in the second half and maintain our poise."

The Orange, whose only loss was to No. 3 Oklahoma State, scored 28 points off Cornell's 23 turnovers.

"Our foulcourt pressure was the best we've played all year," Boheim said. "We really did a good job and forced a lot of turnovers for some easy baskets. That was the difference."

Topper had four turnovers, all in the second half and junior forward Lenny Collins committed eight turnovers, six after the break.

"You would love to win a game like this," Cornell coach Steve Donahue said. "I'm disappointed in the way we lost it. We just lost our composure. I thought if we kept our composure in the backcourt that we could have made a nice run and they might get a little tight and things happen."

The Big Red were 15-for-24 from three-point range, an eye-opening 62.5 percent. They were within 53-44 after a layup by Ryan Rourke with 11:37 left, but Terrence Roberts then had eight points and a block, Warrick hit a hook off the glass, Gerry McNamara scored on a driving layup and Josh Pace hit a runner in the lane after a turnover to boost the lead to 66-49 with 6:23 left.

"We just need to play hard and

dominate teams," said Roberts, who had a career-high 16 points, all in the second half. "We have to concentrate, play every team like it's a Big East championship game or NCAA tournament game. Defensively, we're playing horribly right now."

Cornell made seven three-pointers and only one layup over the final 9:14, but never got closer than 12 points.

McNamara, the Orange's second-leading scorer with a 14.8 average, landed awkwardly after taking a shot and sprained his left ankle with 4:23 remaining in the first half. He played 11 minutes in the second, didn't seem hampered by the injury, and finished with eight points and four assists.

No. 21 Mississippi St. 104, Florida A&M 80: Lawrence Roberts scored 25 points and Winsome Frazier added 24 for the Bulldogs (10-2), who won their fourth straight. Shane Power added 18 points for Mississippi State, which shot 53 percent from the field and led by as many as 31.

Tony Tate had 17 points for the Rattlers (2-6), who played their eighth of nine straight road games to start the season. This was their third against a ranked team as they lost to No. 1 Illinois and No. 23 Michigan State by an average of 31.5 points.

No. 22 Cincinnati 95, Jackson St. 43: Eric Hicks had 17 points and freshman reserve Roy Bright had a career-high 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Bearcats, who improved to 8-0 for the fifth time in the last 10 seasons. Coach Bob Huggins got his 550th career win, improving his record at Cincinnati to 382-119 in 16 seasons.

Antonio Williams-Parker had 12 points for the visiting Tigers (3-8), who shot 23.9 percent from the field and committed 24 turnovers.



Syracuse's Hakim Warrick had 19 points and 10 rebounds Monday night as the Orange defeated Cornell 82-69 in Syracuse, N.Y.



Pittsburgh's Walt Harris took the head coaching job at Stanford last week but will coach the Panthers in the Fiesta Bowl against Utah on Jan. 1. Harris has been Pitt's coach for eight years, but his contract was not renewed by the school.

AP

Stanford-bound Harris stays committed to Pitt

By ALAN ROBINSON
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pitt quarterback Tye Palko clearly isn't happy with the Panthers' pending coaching change, saying it "stinks." Coach Walt Harris doesn't seem all that thrilled with it, either.

Harris, allowed to leave for Stanford last week in a move some players essentially consider a firing, acknowledged it is an emotional time as he prepares to coach the No. 19 Panthers in the Fiesta Bowl against No. 5 Utah on Jan. 1.

"Sure," Harris said Monday night. "I'm trying to act like it isn't, I guess because I think that's probably the way you're supposed to act. We were down at City Council today for University of Pittsburgh Football Day, and it is very emotional. I spent eight years trying to rebuild this football program and I think we accomplished that."

Asked if he wished he were staying, Harris said, "I think those questions are, unfortunately, behind us now. I do love these players, I have told them how much they meant to me, and that life goes on."

Some players were more vocal about Harris' departure, especially Palko, who unsuccessfully lobbied Pitt's administration to give Harris a new contract. Harris was signed through 2006, but the school said the contract wouldn't be extended — an awkward situation that all but guaranteed a coaching change.

"It's a business and it's cut-throat and it stinks," said Palko, the son of a Pittsburgh-area high school coach. "But being around it my whole life, you understand this is part of the job."

"Coach Harris has been great."

He hasn't been selfish about anything, he's been all about the team and we appreciate that."

Harris' 25-12 record since 2002 is the best for a Pitt coach over a three-year span since Jackie Sherrill's teams went 33-3 from 1979-81. Still, athletic director Jeff Long said last week he couldn't say he was "disappointed," Harris is departing.

Long and Harris were not close, and Long was angered in mid-October when the coach's former agent demanded the school give Harris a new contract or let him seek another job.

Long interviewed Carolina Panthers assistant coach Sam Dromm, a former Pitt assistant, on Monday and is winding down his search for Harris' replacement. Among those interviewed were Oklahoma assistant coach Bo Pelini, Baltimore Ravens assistant Matt Cavanaugh, New York Giants assistant Tim Lewis and Pitt defensive coordinator Paul Rhoads. Former Miami Dolphins coach Dave Wannstedt pulled out of consideration Thursday, saying he wasn't ready to take another job.

Pitt has signaled it wants to hire a coach before the players leave camp Thursday, but it wasn't certain Monday if Long is ready to recommend his choice to chancellor Mark A. Nordberg.

Some Pitt players think they already have a good coach, and many remain confused about why Harris is leaving. "I think when it happened, it was (a distraction), third-team All-America tackle Rob Pettit said. "Now, we have our eye on the ball's-eye. Coach Harris said he wanted to coach us in a bowl game and wants to go out with a win, and I want to go out with a win. So we need to go and win now."

Louisville's Petrino signs \$1 million-a-year contract

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Louisville football coach Bobby Petrino signed a contract Tuesday that will pay him \$1 million a year and a \$100,000 bonus if the Cardinals win the national championship.

The 43-year-old Petrino was making \$550,000 a year under his old contract. The new deal adds a \$50,000 bonus if the Cardinals reach the Bowl Championship Series title game and another \$50,000 if the Cardinals win it.

Louisville will join the Big East next season. The Cardinals were not eligible to automatically qualify for the BCS as members of Conference USA.



Petrino

"That's what our goal is," Petrino said of the BCS. "It's certainly something that's out there for us and something we're committed to getting done."

The seventh-ranked Cardinals (10-1) earned the highest ranking in school history and led the nation in points and yards per game. Petrino has been mentioned as a candidate for several major coaching jobs in the past month, but assured members of Louisville's athletics association board Tuesday morning that does not intend to leave.

The new contract, like the old one, runs through the 2010 season. Petrino will earn a \$1 million bonus if he stays through the 2007 season.

"I'm looking forward to the upcoming years," he said. "This is the place I want to be, this is the place my family wants to be. We're looking forward to the future."

Louisville athletic director Tom Jurich expects Petrino's name to be mentioned when high-profile jobs open.

"There are certainly schools out there that have more money than us," Jurich said. "But we're going to do everything in our power to keep everything stabilized here."

The Cardinals play No. 10 Boise State (11-0) in the Liberty Bowl on Dec. 31.

Ohio State suspends QB Smith for Alamo Bowl

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith was suspended on Monday for violating team and NCAA rules and will not play in next week's Alamo Bowl.

Coach Jim Tressel would not say what Smith did or when the violation occurred, but said the university became aware of the problem on Thursday.

By JAYMES SONG

The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Alabama-Birmingham wants to accomplish something seven teams failed to do this season: come to the islands and beat Hawaii.

So spending a week in paradise before facing the Warriors in Friday's Hawaii Bowl might not sound like a good idea, but it's just what UAB football coach Watson Brown says is needed as the Blazers prepare for their first-ever postseason game.

"I think it's easier to come here as a bowl team than just a team playing them in a two-day time frame," he said. "In two days, the players are worn out from walking the beach. In a bowl, they wear themselves out in the first couple days and maybe they'll

calm down in the last three or four and get focused and get their legs back and be ready to play."

The Blazers (7-4) arrived here Saturday to get six days of practice in at Aloha Stadium before the bowl game against the Warriors (7-4), who recorded all of their wins at home.

Brown said the early arrival has helped players adjust to the four-hour time difference, the tropical climate and the distractions of Honolulu. "The key is when you're doing your work, focus on work. When it's play time, make sure you're representing the university but have a good time," he said. "If they don't focus in practice and meetings, we'll get beat Friday."

The Hawaii Bowl, which matches up Western Athletic Conference and Conference USA teams,

College football briefs

Oklahoma State.

Justin Zwick, a sophomore, will start. He had been the starter until he lost the job after mildly separating his left (non-throwing) shoulder in the sixth game of the season.

"I am aware of what is expected, both on and off the field, at Ohio State and I have fallen short of those expectations," Smith said in a statement.

TB Davis among three Volunteers academically ineligible for Cotton Bowl

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee senior tailback Jabari Davis will not travel to the Cotton Bowl because he failed to meet academic requirements.

Davis' playing time decreased dramatically this season. He had 587 yards as a sophomore and 565 last season and only 34 yards on 18 carries this year.

Receiver Derrick Tinsley and linebacker Marvin Mitchell, both out for the season with injuries, also were ruled ineligible for the game against Texas A&M.

Memphis gives West contract extension

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Memphis coach Tommy West agreed to a one-year contract extension after leading the Tigers to back-to-back bowl games for the first time in the program's history.

West received the extension Monday while in Mobile, Ala., where the Tigers (8-5) play Bowling Green in the GMAC Bowl on Wednesday.

"I've made it very clear that this is what I wanted to happen," West said. "I'm really enthused and excited it's going to work out the way we wanted it to work out."

West's new contract runs through 2009 and raises his income to \$800,000 a year.

Memphis has won eight or more games two seasons in a row for the first time in 40 years.

Reserve Texas RB suspended after arrest

AUSTIN — Texas reserve running back Erik Hardeman, who had not played this season because of academic problems, has been suspended indefinitely from the team after a felony arrest on a drug charge.

Police say they found about 20 grams of cocaine in a car Hardeman was riding in last week.

According to Austin police, Hardeman was charged with felony possession of a controlled substance on Dec. 14. The second degree felony charge carries a penalty of two to 20 years in prison.

UAB warms up to playing Hawaii

By JAYMES SONG

The Associated Press

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The Hawaii Bowl, which matches up Western Athletic Conference and Conference USA teams,

is actually considered a neutral bowl site. Both teams are staying in a Waikiki beachside hotel, just a couple miles from the University of Hawaii campus.

"We're just as distracted as they are," said UAB's defensive coordinator, Elton Rouse. "Eliminating Hawaii's all-WAC comeback."

But Brown said there's nothing neutral about playing Hawaii at Aloha Stadium, where the Warriors' offense averages 42.8 points and 472.6 yards per game. Hawaii averaged just 19 points and 344.8 yards on the road.

"We're the only team in the bowls playing an away game," he said.

But Brown and his players aren't complaining.

"In Birmingham, it's about 25 degrees and cold," UAB quarterback Darrell Hackney said. "Here, we're in tank tops and shorts all day. Now we're adjusted to the heat and we're ready to go."

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Iverson mits 5 again, 76ers lose to Jazz

The Associated Press

Allen Iverson was unstoppable again, hitting long jumpers and running floaters from every angle on the court.

Yao Ming just parked his big body under the basket and made one easy layup after another.

With a dazzling display of quickness and shooting, the 6-foot Iverson scored 51 points Monday night, becoming only the seventh player in NBA history to reach at least 50 in consecutive games.

But he fouled out with 4.5 seconds left, setting up Mehmet Okur's winning free throws in Utah's 103-101 victory at Philadelphia.

"If a guy's going well, you milk it. You just keep running the same play over and over until they stop it," Iverson said.

That's exactly what the Houston Rockets did, going down low time and time again. The 7-foot Yao, who finished with a season-high 40 points in a 114-102 victory over the visiting Raptors.

"It seemed like he was just imbedded in the paint," Toronto's Eric Williams said. "It seemed like he spent 20 seconds in there sometimes."

Tracy McGrady added 34 points and 12 rebounds for Houston, which set a season high for points. Yao also grabbed 10 rebounds and shot 13-for-16 from the field.

Only one of Yao's baskets — an 11-foot turnaround jumper late in the fourth quarter — came from more than 9 feet out. He hit five layups and four dunks, one 5-foot shot and two 9-footers. He also made 14 of 18 free throws.

In Philadelphia, Iverson followed up his 54-point game Saturday in Milwaukee with another game, becoming the first Sixers player to score 50 in back-to-back games and the first Philadelphia player to accomplish the feat since Will Chamberlain for the Warriors in 1962.

The first NBA player to score 50 points in consecutive games was Antawn Jamison in December 2000 with Golden State. Iverson joined Rick Barry, Elgin Baylor, Chamberlain, Bernard King, Michael Jordan and Jamison as the only players to accomplish the feat.

Iverson scored on a variety of shots, hitting three-pointers, off-balance drives and a reverse left-handed layup that brought the crowd to its feet. He went 18-for-31 from the field, including 4-for-6 from three-point range, and 11-for-17 from the line. He also had six assists.

"He puts up 50 points two nights in a row and he's still looking for us," teammate Kyle Korver said. "It's pretty amazing."

Iverson scored 21 in the third quarter to show the Sixers overcame a 16-point halftime deficit, only to come back from the bench as the comeback fell short. After Okur hit his foul shots Willie Green missed a runner, ending Utah's seven-game road losing streak and three-game win streak.

Bulls 92, Trail Blazers 87. At Chicago, Ben Gordon scored 23 points and Michael Jordan in attendance, and the Bulls won their fourth straight for the first time since Jordan's 1998 championship team won 13 in a row.

Carter eager to show Nets his best stuff

The Associated Press

FORT MILL, S.C. — Vince Carter's strained left Achilles' tendon will keep him from playing Tuesday night when the New Jersey Nets face the Charlotte Bobcats.

But Carter can't wait to play for his new team and prove he hasn't lost a step or an inch on his jump.

"I'm going to make a lot of people eat their words when it's time," the former Raptor said

after his first practice with the Nets.

Carter was traded from Toronto to New Jersey on Friday for Aaron Williams, Eric Williams, Alonzo Mourning and two conditional first-round picks. The deal was finalized Monday. Mourning probably will be bought out of his contract.

For the 27-year-old Carter, this is a new beginning after 6½ sea-

sons in Toronto, where he was the face of the franchise.

Carter's role with New Jersey will be much different. The Nets are Jason Kidd's team first, then Richard Jefferson's. That doesn't bode well for the former Star.

"I'm happy with it," Carter said. "I'm just there to be that other guy, that third guy to help out the first two. It's going to be fun."

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
New York	13	5	.726
Sacramento	11	7	.611
Philadelphia	10	14	.417
Boston	10	14	.417
New Jersey	7	17	.292

Southeast Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Miami	19	7	.731
Washington	14	9	.609
Orlando	10	13	.435
Charlotte	10	13	.435
Atlanta	4	20	.167

Central Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Cleveland	10	5	.682
Detroit	12	5	.706
Indiana	11	7	.611
Chicago	8	15	.346
Milwaukee	8	15	.346

Western Conference

Northwest Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
San Antonio	20	3	.870
Dallas	16	6	.640
Portland	16	6	.640
Memphis	12	14	.464
New Orleans	11	17	.391

Southwest Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Seattle	18	7	.727
Minnesota	20	3	.870
Denver	13	12	.520
Portland	12	12	.500
Utah	11	13	.454

Pacific Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Phoenix	22	3	.880
Los Angeles	15	6	.714
L.A. Lakers	13	14	.482
Golden State	17	8	.680

Midwest Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Utah	10	13	.435
Houston	14	10	.583
Chicago	12	12	.500
Phoenix	12	10	.545
Memphis	12	14	.464
Washington	10	13	.435

Tuesdays games			
Team	W	L	Pct
New Jersey at Charlotte	1	0	1.000
Boston at Miami	1	0	1.000
Dallas at New York	1	0	1.000
Washington at Sacramento	1	0	1.000
New Orleans at L.A. Clippers	1	0	1.000

Wednesdays games			
Team	W	L	Pct
Utah at Portland	1	0	1.000
New York at Boston	1	0	1.000
San Antonio at Indiana	1	0	1.000
Dallas at Atlanta	1	0	1.000
Chicago at Philadelphia	1	0	1.000
Cleveland at New York	1	0	1.000
Philadelphia at Milwaukee	1	0	1.000
Charlotte at Houston	1	0	1.000
Denver at Seattle	1	0	1.000
Charlotte at Golden State	1	0	1.000
Golden State at L.A. Lakers	1	0	1.000
Phoenix at Memphis	1	0	1.000
Minnesota at Philadelphia	1	0	1.000
Memphis at Toronto	1	0	1.000
Miami at Sacramento	1	0	1.000

Three-Point Goals

Team	Goals	Opponent	Goals
Portland	14	Golden State	11
Golden State	13	Portland	11
Portland	12	Golden State	11
Golden State	11	Portland	11
Portland	10	Golden State	11
Golden State	10	Portland	11
Portland	9	Golden State	11
Golden State	9	Portland	11
Portland	8	Golden State	11
Golden State	8	Portland	11
Portland	7	Golden State	11
Golden State	7	Portland	11
Portland	6	Golden State	11
Golden State	6	Portland	11
Portland	5	Golden State	11
Golden State	5	Portland	11
Portland	4	Golden State	11
Golden State	4	Portland	11
Portland	3	Golden State	11
Golden State	3	Portland	11
Portland	2	Golden State	11
Golden State	2	Portland	11
Portland	1	Golden State	11
Golden State	1	Portland	11
Portland	0	Golden State	11
Golden State	0	Portland	11

Rebounds

Team	Rebounds	Opponent	Rebounds
Portland	48	Golden State	45
Golden State	45	Portland	45
Portland	44	Golden State	45
Golden State	44	Portland	45
Portland	43	Golden State	45
Golden State	43	Portland	45
Portland	42	Golden State	45
Golden State	42	Portland	45
Portland	41	Golden State	45
Golden State	41	Portland	45
Portland	40	Golden State	45
Golden State	40	Portland	45
Portland	39	Golden State	45
Golden State	39	Portland	45
Portland	38	Golden State	45
Golden State	38	Portland	45
Portland	37	Golden State	45
Golden State	37	Portland	45
Portland	36	Golden State	45
Golden State	36	Portland	45
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Portland	6	Golden State	45
Golden State	6	Portland	45
Portland	5	Golden State	45
Golden State	5	Portland	45
Portland	4	Golden State	45
Golden State	4	Portland	45
Portland	3	Golden State	45
Golden State	3	Portland	45
Portland	2	Golden State	45
Golden State	2	Portland	45
Portland	1	Golden State	45
Golden State	1	Portland	45
Portland	0	Golden State	45
Golden State	0	Portland	45

Assists

Team	Assists	Opponent	Assists
Portland	28	Golden State	25
Golden State	25	Portland	25
Portland	24	Golden State	25
Golden State	24	Portland	25
Portland	23	Golden State	25
Golden State	23	Portland	25
Portland	22	Golden State	25
Golden State	22	Portland	25
Portland	21	Golden State	25
Golden State	21	Portland	25
Portland	20	Golden State	25
Golden State	20	Portland	25
Portland	19	Golden State	25
Golden State	19	Portland	25
Portland	18	Golden State	25
Golden State	18	Portland	25
Portland	17	Golden State	25
Golden State	17	Portland	25
Portland	16	Golden State	25
Golden State	16	Portland	25
Portland	15	Golden State	25
Golden State	15	Portland	25
Portland	14	Golden State	25
Golden State	14	Portland	25
Portland	13	Golden State	25
Golden State	13	Portland	25
Portland	12	Golden State	25
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Portland	10	Golden State	25
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Portland	8	Golden State	25
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Portland	7	Golden State	25
Golden State	7	Portland	25
Portland	6	Golden State	25
Golden State	6	Portland	25
Portland	5	Golden State	25
Golden State	5	Portland	25
Portland	4	Golden State	25
Golden State	4	Portland	25
Portland	3	Golden State	25
Golden State	3	Portland	25
Portland	2	Golden State	25
Golden State	2	Portland	25
Portland	1	Golden State	25
Golden State	1	Portland	25
Portland	0	Golden State	25
Golden State	0	Portland	25

Steals

Team	Steals	Opponent	Steals
Portland	12	Golden State	10
Golden State	10	Portland	10
Portland	11	Golden State	10
Golden State	11	Portland	10
Portland	10	Golden State	10
Golden State	10	Portland	10
Portland	9	Golden State	10
Golden State	9	Portland	10
Portland	8	Golden State	10
Golden State	8	Portland	10
Portland	7	Golden State	10
Golden State	7	Portland	10
Portland	6	Golden State	10
Golden State	6	Portland	10
Portland	5	Golden State	10
Golden State	5	Portland	10
Portland	4	Golden State	10
Golden State	4	Portland	10
Portland	3	Golden State	10
Golden State	3	Portland	10
Portland	2	Golden State	10
Golden State	2	Portland	10
Portland	1	Golden State	10
Golden State	1	Portland	10
Portland	0	Golden State	10
Golden State	0	Portland	10

Blocks

Snyder 1-2, Bell 1-3, Okur 0-1, Elsley 0-1, Giricek 0-2), Philadelphia 9-17 (Korver 5-7, Iverson 4-6, Igoudala 0-4). Fouled out—Iverson. Rebounds—Utah 47 (Boozer, Okur 10), Philadelphia 54 (Jackson 13). Assists—Utah 29 (Arrowood 11), Philadelphia 14 (Iverson 6).



Lions holder Nick Harris lays on the ball after being tackled by Vikings cornerback Terrence Shaw on an extra point attempt. The point would have tied the game with 12 seconds left, but Minnesota won 28-27.

Break has Vikings snapping to attention

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
The Associated Press

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. — The Minnesota Vikings, in danger of watching their season come completely undone, finally got the big break they desperately needed.

"You take the wins any way you can get them," coach Mike Tice said Monday, less than 24 hours after a bad snap by Detroit's Don Muhlbach prevented the Lions from attempting the game-tying extra point with 8 seconds left and gave the Vikings a wild 28-27 victory.

A little more than three hours after that improbable finish, Green Bay (8-6) lost at home to Jacksonville and fell back into a tie for first place with Minnesota in the NFC North.

That created a colossal matchup at the Metrolink for Friday afternoon, pitting the Packers against the Vikings for the division title. Tiebreakers indicate that the winner will clinch, regardless of what happens in the regular season's final week.

"We're starting to kind of come back around here," offensive coordinator Scott Linehan said. "Hopefully we're peaking at the right time."

After the offense stalled throughout much of the second half, Daunte Culpepper led two long touchdown drives in the fourth quarter. He was asked, after the game, if the outcome proved that this year's team is different than the one that lost seven of its last 10 and missed the playoffs in 2003.

"I think it does show that," said Culpepper, who passed for 404 yards and three touchdowns. "We just keep fighting all the way till the end, no matter what. We had luck on our side. If you keep fighting, you have to get a break sometime."

Tice recalled a crazy play in last year's loss to the New York Giants that seemed to start the season-ending 37-3 slide. Clinging to a one-point fourth-quarter lead, Minnesota watched a blocked New York punt was scooped up by the Giants' Wesley Marshall — who ran 20 yards for a first down.

Green Bay at Minnesota
9 p.m. Friday
AFN-Sports and Radio

Game time is Central European.

"That kind of snowballed our season last year and put the black cloud over us for a number of weeks," Tice said. "I don't think we've had that feeling at this year. . . . This team has battled until the end in every game. We haven't always come through with the play to win the game, with a stop to win the game, but we certainly have not got that 'Woe is me' feeling."

Though the Vikings forced three turnovers and held the Lions to 13 points until midway through the fourth quarter, the pass coverage remains a pressing concern. Joey Harrington, booed more than one time on Sunday, passed for a career-high 361 yards after throwing for only 47 against the Packers the week before.

Detroit's offense, now 27th in the league, totaled 463 yards and scored what should have been the tying touchdown by driving 80 yards in less than 1½ minutes.

"We've got to have enough confidence in ourselves defensively and get off the field somehow, some way, no matter what it takes," Tice said.

Getting cornerback Antoine Winfield (sprained ankle) back for the Green Bay game will help a lot. Winfield looked good in a workout Monday, according to Tice, and should help relieve the pressure on Brian Williams and Terrence Shaw.

Shaw struggled with dehydration and chest congestion, and Williams was worn out from playing defense and three special teams.

Backup Derek Ross struggled again, and safety Corey Chavous was forced to play cornerback in the dime defense on the Lions' final drive.

"I could go on for days about some things that I could have done better — but the bottom line is that we won the game," Chavous said. "That's all that matters to any of us in here right now."

Cardinals have chance to win NFC West at 7-9

BY MEL REISNER

The Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — The Arizona Cardinals may have turned their season around with one game.

The Cardinals, who had lost four straight, emerged from a 31-7 win over St. Louis with a quarterback who has the unquestioned respect of his teammates, without a significant new injury and improbably positioned for a playoff run.

"That was our best game of the year," coach Dennis Green said Monday. "It was good to play a game that you would like to put in a bottle and bring it out whenever you want to."

Arizona, which had given up an average of 338 yards a game during the skid, held the Rams to 185 and denied them an offensive touchdown on their most serious threat thanks to a highlight-reel play by free safety Ifeanyi Odele, who punched the ball out of Torrey Holt's arms and recovered it in the end zone.

Marshall Faulk gained 22 yards on 10 carries, the Rams' only running plays.

"We were able to take the run away, and that was our goal," said Darrell Dockett.

Green felt the defense was becoming predictable, so Dockett and Ross Kolodziej were used at both defensive tackle and end against the Rams, and defensive tackle Vondra Black had a prominent role in nickel situations to further mix things up.

St. Louis' only TD came on a 61-yard fumble return by Leonard Little with seconds left in the second quarter.

"We've been waiting for a goose egg all season," Odele said.

No 7-9 team has ever won an NFL division title, but the Cardinals have a decent shot at doing just that. They play the Seahawks in Seattle next week and finish the regular season with Tampa Bay at home.

If Arizona wins out and the Seahawks and Rams lose out, the Cardinals will make history by hosting a playoff game with a losing record. They also retain a longer shot at earning a wild-card berth, but only if Carolina loses at Tampa Bay on Sunday.

"Everything gets kind of exciting in December," Green said. "We're happy to win, because we can be part of that excitement. The game against Seattle is a big game for us."

Green's finally settling on Josh McCown, whose benching for the games coincided with the first three losses in the skid, should strengthen the Cardinals down the stretch.

Both acknowledged that McCown's time on the bench, although a bitter experience, gave him a different perspective that should translate into more consistent play.



Cardinals quarterback Josh McCown (12) celebrates his touchdown with Anquan Boldin during the fourth quarter against the Rams on Sunday.

McCown, who passed for a career-high 307 yards in a 31-28 overtime loss to San Francisco last week, had his best NFL game, throwing for 287 yards and two TDs — both to Larry Fitzgerald — with no interceptions. He also ran for two scores.

Special teams also were superb. Punter Scott Player had his second straight game averaging more than 50 yards, and Neil Rackers nailed a 48-yard field goal to improve to 18-for-22.

Rackers also extended his NFL-leading total of touchdowns on kickoffs to 19, breaking Joe Nedney's franchise record (17) in the process.

"Neil was a guy who showed potential as a strong-leg guy, but he did not have the consistency that he has right now," Green said.

Linebacker Raynoch Thompson (shoulder) sat out the game, and Green said it might be another week before the former starter is available. Of even more concern is the torn meniscus in left tackle Leonard Davis' left knee.

Davis was considering limiting his practice time to try to get through the end of season before having the cartilage repaired.

Losing the 6-foot-6, 380-pound lineman would be a severe blow because right tackle L.J. Shelton, the team's left tackle the last five years, was placed on injured reserve Dec. 14 with a ligament strain.

NFL playoff scenarios

FOR WEEK 15

AFC EAST

New England has clinched division title.

New England can clinch first-round bye with: 1) A win next week 2) A tie next week and a San Diego tie.

New York Jets can clinch playoff berth with: 1) A win or tie, OR 2) Buffalo and Baltimore lose or tie, OR 3) Buffalo, Denver and Jacksonville lose or tie, OR 4) Baltimore, Denver and Jacksonville lose or tie.

AFC NORTH

Pittsburgh has clinched division title.

Pittsburgh can clinch homefield advantage throughout playoffs with: 1) A win OR 2) A tie • New England loses next week, OR 3) New England loses next week and Indianapolis-San Diego tie.

Pittsburgh can clinch first-round bye with: 1) A win or tie, OR 2) Indianapolis-San Diego tie, OR 3) New England loss next week, plus an Indianapolis loss.

AFC WEST

Indianapolis has clinched division title.

Indianapolis can clinch playoff berth with: 1) Jacksonville win, plus Buffalo, Baltimore, Denver lose and Jacksonville clinches strength of victory tiebreaker over Buffalo, Baltimore and Denver.

San Diego has clinched division title.

Philadelphia has clinched division title and homefield advantage throughout the playoffs.

NFC NORTH

Green Bay has clinched a playoff berth and can clinch the division title with a win.

Minnesota can clinch division title.

Minnesota can clinch playoff berth with: 1) A tie, OR 2) Either St. Louis or Carolina lose or tie.

SOUTH

Atlanta has clinched division title and homefield advantage throughout the playoffs.

Carolina can clinch playoff berth with: 1) A win, OR 2) A tie plus Carolina and Chicago lose or tie • Seattle win • Dallas tie.

NFC WEST

Seattle can clinch division title with: 1) A win and St. Louis loss or tie, OR 2) A tie and St. Louis loss.

Seattle can clinch playoff berth with: 1) A win, OR 2) A tie plus Carolina and New Orleans lose or tie.

Seattle can clinch first-round bye with: 1) A win, OR 2) A tie plus Carolina and New Orleans lose or tie.

Seattle can clinch first-round bye with: 1) A win, OR 2) A tie plus Carolina and New Orleans lose or tie.

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Raiders' Woods arrested for public intoxication

The Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Four-time Pro Bowl cornerback Charles Woodson and safety Marques Anderson were arrested early Monday for investigation of public intoxication following the Raiders' victory over the Tennessee Titans.

NFL briefs

The Oakland Police Department said the players were arrested at 4:20 a.m. PST in downtown Oakland after refusing to leave the back seat of a woman's car. Both were jailed briefly, police spokesman Danielle Ashford said.

"Apparently what happened, an officer in our transportation section was flagged down by a woman who said the men were in the back of her car and wouldn't get out," said Ashford, who was uncertain whether the players knew the woman. "They were very uncooperative. They had problems maintaining their balance, bloodshot watery eyes and had a strong odor of alcohol. They were acting in a belligerent manner."

Woodson, 28, and Anderson, 25, were booked into Oakland City Jail. Bail is not required for the misdemeanor offense, Ashford said, but Anderson had to post \$5,000 because of an outstanding traffic violation. Both were released between 8 and 9

a.m., Ashford said.

Ashford didn't know when the players would appear in court.

"It's a situation where you'd like your guys to not be in that situation," said coach Norv Turner, who has not spoken with Woodson or Anderson since the incident. "The thing we always talk about, those hours are where problems turn up. That's how you avoid them, by staying out of those situations. Again, I don't know a lot about exactly what happened, so I'd prefer not to comment on it until I do."

Woodson, designated as a Raiders' franchise player in February, didn't play during the 40-35 victory over the Titans because of an injured knee, but huddled through the locker room high-fiving teammates afterward.

He held out for four months trying the get a more lucrative contract but insisted in September he's more to be concerned with than a long-term deal. Such a deal could be in jeopardy.

He signed a one-year tender for \$8,782 million after missing 33 days of training camp. Woodson has 74 tackles, 2½ sacks and two forced fumbles this season.

He hadn't missed a game since being suspended and sent home by former coach Bill Callahan for the final game last season at San Diego for missing curfew.

Turner hasn't had any significant issues with Woodson.

Anderson was arrested in a

NFL injury update

Injuries to prominent NFL players, followed by team's prognosis. (See Friday's edition for complete injury report provided by the league.)
Seaworthy: QB Matt Hasselbeck (elbow) questionable; LB Chad Brown (foot) expected to play.
Titan: RB Chris Brown (leg) will miss team's last two games.

September trade with Green Bay.

McGee's status uncertain after Bills RB hurts knee

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Running back Willis McGee has a hyperextended and bruised right knee that could prevent him from playing in Buffalo's game Sunday at San Francisco.

Tests conducted Monday indicated the running back will not require surgery, McGee's agent, Drew Rosenhaus, told The Associated Press.

"It's great news," Rosenhaus said. "It's not something that will keep him out an extended period of time, but we don't know about this week."

Coach Mike Mulroney would only list McGee as day to day, declining to discuss the severity of the injury.

McGee was hurt when he stumbled and landed awkwardly while catching a swing pass in the second quarter of Buffalo's 33-17 win at Cincinnati on Sunday.

The injury is not to McGee's left knee, the one he tore in his

final college outing for the University of Miami in the 2003 national championship game.

Ramsey will begin next season as Redskins' starting QB

ASHBURN, Va. — Patrick Ramsey has already won next season's quarterback competition for the Washington Redskins.

Coach Joe Gibbs said Monday that Ramsey will be the starter to begin the 2005 season, and he expects Mark Brunell to remain with the team as a high-priced backup.

"We're starting with Patrick," Gibbs said. "That's who we're going with. He's our guy. We're hoping he continues to progress."

Ramsey has completed 65 percent of his passes, with five touchdowns and three interceptions, and an 83.3 rating in five starts since replacing Brunell. The Redskins are 2-3 in those games, losing to Philadelphia twice and Pittsburgh.

"When somebody goes in and starts playing good, the way I look at it, he's earned the right," Gibbs said. "That started from the first day he went in there and started playing good. I'm kind of reluctant to pull guys in and out, so I kind of give him a shot and we're going until something would happen to tell me that, hey, we need to make a change."

The Redskins paid a high price for Brunell in the offseason, trading a third-round draft pick to

Jacksonville for him and then signing him to a seven-year, \$43 million contract with an \$8.6 million signing bonus.

Martz denies he's resigning

ST. LOUIS — As bleak as the situation looks, Rams coach Mike Martz isn't giving up.

Martz, whose fifth season with the team has been disastrous, on Monday had a strong rebuttal to an ESPN report he might consider quitting. The Rams were among the preseason NFC favorites after going 12-14 last year, but are 6-8.

"I would never resign from this job," Martz said. "I love this job and I would never leave these guys. We've got a real solid crew of young players and it's going to eventually be a terrific team, and I'm not going to ever walk away from something like that."

Martz has two years left on a contract that pays him \$3.5 million annually.

"I coach because I want to coach, and I love being here," Martz said. "That hasn't changed. We're going to forge on and get this thing back up and running the way it should be."

Martz is 51-32, including play-off games. He was the offensive coordinator in 1999, when the Rams won their first Super Bowl. He led the Rams to a 14-2 record and a Super Bowl loss in 2002.

De Rio defends Darius' hit that KO'd Ferguson

BY MARK LONG
The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Jacksonville coach Jack Del Rio defended hard-hitting safety Donovan Darius on Monday, saying he never intended to hurt Robert Ferguson with a clothesline tackle that put the Green Bay receiver in the hospital.

Del Rio said he expected Darius to be fined but not suspended for the shot that temporarily paralyzed Ferguson and knocked him unconscious Sunday.

"It was a nasty shot, but I don't believe his intent was to headbutt the guy," Del Rio said.

Ferguson was taken off the field on a stretcher and temporarily paralyzed below the waist following the hit. He regained feeling and movement of his way to the hospital, where he spent Sunday night. He will remain there at least one more night for tests and observation.

"They gave me no indication that it's career-threatening. But I don't know if you can make that even less than 24 hours" later, Packers coach Mike Sherman said. "All signs indicate that he's going to be fine."

Ferguson was experiencing numbness on his left side a day after getting hurt, Eric Armstrong, director of player development for EO Sports Management, the agency that represents Ferguson.

As Ferguson made a leaping, 31-yard catch at midfield, Darius hit the defenseless receiver across the neck with a left forearm.

The shot ripped off Ferguson's helmet, stunned the crowd at Lambeau Field and infuriated the Packers with a 1-6 setback in a 28-25 loss to the Jaguars.

Darius was flagged 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct and ejected by referee Ed Hochuli.

"He plays a physical brand of football, but he plays within the rules," Del Rio said. "He did not go



Jacksonville's Donovan Darius (20) was ejected during Sunday's game for this clothesline hit on Green Bay receiver Robert Ferguson, who was knocked unconscious and temporarily paralyzed below the waist. Ferguson is expected to fully recover.

helmet to helmet. He did not project himself or launch himself into the guy. He attempted to club at the football and ended up clubbing the guy in the head. It should be flagged and it was. I'm sure it will be fined and it should be.

"If he really wanted to hurt the guy, he would launch himself or he would go helmet on helmet and really kill the guy."

Sherman called the hit "a cheap shot," and some players said there probably would have been retaliation had Darius stayed in the game.

AP Sports Writer Anne Stapleton in Green Bay, Wis., contributed to this story.

Owens: Star WR targets Super Bowl return

OWENS, FROM BACK PAGE

"He's a great player, but can the offense go on? Absolutely," coach Andy Reid said Monday. "We have some pretty good players on this offensive unit, so it'll still function and do very well this week."

But without Owens, the Eagles will be left with the same lackluster receiving corps that has disappeared when needed in NFC title games. Freddie Mitchell or Greg Lewis could join Todd Pinkston as the other starting wideout. Those three have a combined 60 catches for 1,073 yards.

Pinkston has an injured knee. Reid said the Eagles will activate wide receiver Billy McMillen. Running back Brian Westbrook, who missed the playoffs last year, will also get more looks.

Owens, who has 77 catches for 1,200 yards and a team-record 14 touchdowns, also has a fracture a few inches below his knee. Head trainer Rick Burkholder said the fracture is not as serious, and can heal without surgery.

Owens will have surgery on his ankle Wednesday and has only an outside shot to be ready to play in the Super Bowl on Feb. 6.

"We're talking about playing in one game that he's never played in before," Burkholder said. "He could do it safely."

Owens had an MRI at the Ea-

gles' complex Monday morning, and complained of pain in his lower leg. He then saw an ankle specialist in Baltimore. Tests revealed a sprained distal ligament.

"I went down there optimistic, hoping for the best, and got the worst of news," Owens said. "Things happen. You've just got to move on from it."

Owens still planned to play in Jacksonville, Fla., site of the Super Bowl, which the Eagles have never won.

"They will probably have to put me in a straitjacket," he said. "Other than that, I am overwhelmingly confident that they can win the two playoff games, the championship, obviously. Depending on how my rehab progresses, I am able to go. God willing, then I am going to give it a shot."

Owens was hurt on the second play of the third quarter of Philadelphia's win over Dallas on Sunday when he was dragged down from behind by Roy Williams on a 20-yard reception. Owens immediately grabbed the back of his knee, which was then benched.

The Eagles finished first in the conference three straight years, but couldn't take advantage of playing at home in the past two NFC championship games, losing to Tampa Bay and Carolina. The Eagles also lost in the NFC title game in 2002, in St. Louis.

NFL scoreboard

American Conference

East	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	12	0	.857	393	246
N.Y. Jets	10	4	.714	287	266
Buffalo	8	6	.571	330	248
Miami	5	9	.357	244	317
South	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
y-Indianapolis	10	4	.786	474	287
Jacksonville	8	6	.571	248	233
Houston	6	8	.429	274	317
Tennessee	4	10	.286	304	383
North	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
y-Pittsburgh	13	0	.923	323	220
Baltimore	8	6	.571	280	235
Cincinnati	6	8	.429	313	244
Cleveland	3	11	.214	247	366
West	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
y-San Diego	10	4	.786	301	262
Denver	8	6	.571	311	274
Kansas City	6	8	.429	435	381
Oakland	5	9	.357	254	358

National Conference

East	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
yz-Philadelphia	11	0	.846	328	262
Dallas	9	5	.643	299	267
N.Y. Giants	9	5	.643	253	300
Washington	5	9	.357	289	254
South	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
y-Atlanta	10	4	.786	301	283
Carolina	6	8	.429	300	296
New Orleans	5	9	.357	274	317
Tampa Bay	5	9	.357	274	255
North	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
y-Green Bay	8	6	.571	339	335
Minnesota	8	6	.571	280	235
Chicago	5	9	.357	294	281
Detroit	5	9	.357	258	313
West	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
Seattle	9	5	.643	300	226
S.F. 49ers	6	8	.429	267	266
Arizona	5	9	.357	251	291
San Francisco	2	10	.143	246	390

Saturday's games

Pittsburgh 33, N.Y. Giants 30
Washington 26, San Francisco 16
Atlanta 34, Carolina 31

Sunday's games

Houston 24, Tennessee 16
Minnesota 28, Detroit 17
N.Y. Jets 37, Seattle 14
Kansas City 45, Denver 17
Buffalo 17, Cleveland 17
Philadelphia 12, Dallas 7
Washington 26, Cincinnati 10
Arizona 31, St. Louis 7
San Francisco 21, Tampa Bay 15
Jacksonville 28, Green Bay 25
Carolina 20, Tennessee 36
Indianapolis 20, Baltimore 10

Monday's game

Miami 28, New England 10

Friday's games

Green Bay at Minnesota
Oakland at Kansas City

Saturday, Dec. 25

Denver at Tennessee

Sunday, Dec. 26

Chicago at Detroit
Washington at Indianapolis
Baltimore at Pittsburgh
Carolina at Jacksonville
Atlanta at New Orleans
N.Y. Jets at Cincinnati
Buffalo at San Francisco
New England at N.Y. Jets
Philadelphia at Seattle
Washington at Dallas
Carolina at Tampa Bay
Cleveland at Miami
St. Louis at Kansas City

Monday, Dec. 27

Philadelphia at St. Louis

Monday

Dolphins 29, Patriots 28

New England 27 7 7 28
Miami 28 28 28 28

First Quarter

NE—Faulk 31 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 9:59.

Second Quarter

Mia—Morris 3 run (Mike kick), 6:30.

Mia—Dillon 3 run (Vinatieri kick), 7:01.

Mia—FG Marc 3, 1:52.

Third Quarter

Mia—Morris 1 run (Mike kick), 6:50.

NE—Dillon 1 run (Mike kick), 6:50.

Mia—Dillon 2 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 1:23.

Fourth Quarter

NE—Graham 2 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 3:59.

Mia—Morris 1 run (pass failed), 2:07.

Mia—Thompson 21 pass from Feeley (pass failed), 1:23.

A—7:16, 23.

Final Score

First downs 20 18

Total Net Yards 322 311

Rushes-Yards 38-166 20-52

Passing 156 179

Punt Returns 6-11 5-19

Kick Returns 1-0 1-0

Comp-Att-Int 22-35 0-0

Fumbles-Lost 4-4 6-9

Punts 4-28 4-25

Penalties-Yards 6-50 9-51

Time of Possession 26:56 24:54

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—New England: Dillon 26-121, Faulk 3-15, Morris 1-24, Pass 7-17, 100 yds.

Receiving—New England: Dillon 2-40, Faulk 1-13, Morris 1-13, Pass 7-17, 100 yds.

Passing—New England: Brady 18-24-0, 247 yds.

Receiving—New England: Patten 4-41, Dillon 2-40, Faulk 1-13, Morris 1-13, Pass 7-17, 100 yds.

Chambers 3-24, Thompson 2-31, Gilmore 2-10.

Missed field goals—None.

Dolphins rally to stun Patriots

Brady's INTs help Miami out of 11-point hole in 2:07

BY TIM REYNOLDS

The Associated Press

MIAMI—Miami already knew it would be home for the playoffs. The Dolphins might have also ensured that New England will have to reach another Super Bowl.

A.J. Feeley's 21-yard touchdown pass to Derritus Thompson on fourth-and-10 with 1:23 remaining capped Miami's stirring comeback from an 11-point deficit in the final three minutes, sealing a stunning 29-28 victory over the Patriots on Monday night.

Tom Brady had three touchdown passes for New England (12-2), but also had four interceptions — including one that led to Miami's winning score. It was New England's second loss in 29 games, but one that means Pittsburgh needs to win one of its final two games to claim home-field advantage for the AFC playoffs.

Miami improved to 3-11 and avoided — temporarily, perhaps — setting a franchise record for losses in a season.

"We could easily have 10 wins right now, but things haven't fallen for us like they should of," said linebacker Brendon Ayanbadejo, who made the pivotal interception in his first career start. "But tonight, who cares what happens? We just lost 14, 14 weeks of the season? We just beat the defending Super Bowl champions. That's all that matters."

Brady's third touchdown pass, a 2-yarder to Daniel Graham with 3:59 left, put the Patriots ahead 28-17 and seemed to wrap up a

victory for the visitors. Heads drooped on the Miami sideline, and fans who braved an unseasonable 52-degree night in South Florida began making their way to the exit.

They missed the highlight of Miami's season.

Sammy Morris' 1-yard run, his second touchdown of the game, capped a seven-play, 68-yard drive that drew Miami within 28-23 with 2:07 left.

And then Brady made an uncharacteristic mistake. Instead of just taking a sack by Jason Taylor on third down and resigning New England to punting the ball, he spun and threw blindly upfield.

"It's just not a good play, and if we want to win these games, we can't do that," said Brady, who fell to 5-3 against Miami. "We've got to play better and it starts with me. I've got to go out and play better."

Added Taylor: "Was I surprised he threw it? I was. But I was glad he did."

Ayanbadejo caught it with ease, and moments later, the Dolphins scored and salvaged some pride from a lost season. Feeley's throw to Thompson was perfect, in a position where only he could catch it — and where defensive back Troy Brown had no chance. Feeley finished 22-for-35 for 198 yards, one touchdown and — for the first time as a Miami starter — no interceptions.

"It's a testament to A.J. Feeley and what he's done for us all year," said safety Sammy Knight, who had two interceptions. "He's had some hard times, some tough



Dolphins defensive end Jason Taylor sacks Patriots quarterback Tom Brady late in the fourth quarter. Miami intercepted Brady four times, including twice in the final three minutes that helped Miami rally.

times, but tonight he hung in there, made some crucial throws, made some crucial plays for us."

Brady's fourth interception sailed to Arturo Freeman with 58 seconds left, and Miami ran out the clock.

"We just didn't get it done in any phase of the game," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said. "It certainly wasn't any one play. It was a combination of a lot of things and for the most part, they were in Miami's favor — especially at the end."

The Patriots lost despite a 121-yard rushing performance by Corey Dillon, and they lost after

leading at halftime for the first time in 32 games. Dillon ran for one touchdown and caught a pass from Brady for another.

Kevin Faulk also had a touchdown catch, a 31-yarder that started the scoring and extended New England's NFL-record streak of games scoring first to 19 — 22 including last year's playoff run. "We can't face anybody but ourselves," Patriots safety Rodney Harrison said. "We had the lead with four minutes to go and we blew it."

Trae Minor had a 1-yard scoring run for Miami, which beat New England for the first time in the team's past five meetings.

Bates shows he can get job done

BY STEVEN WINE

The Associated Press

MIAMI—On the eve of a big job interview, Jim Bates fattened his résumé.

The Miami Dolphins gave their interim coach the strongest possible recommendation Monday night, staging a late comeback to beat the Super Bowl champion New England Patriots 29-28.

Bates was to interview Tuesday for the job of coaching the Dolphins next season.

The guy is a guy I'd play for any day," quarterback A.J. Brady said. "The guys in the locker room adore him."

Bates remains a long shot for the job, however. LSU coach Nick Saban has been the front-runner since Dave Wannstedt resigned last season.

The Dolphins, whose search drew criticism last week from a group that advocates minority hiring, interviewed former Oakland Raiders coach Art Shell on Monday. The Hall of Fame offensive tackle became the NFL's first black coach of the modern era in 1989 with the Raiders.

Dolphins President Eddie Jones confirmed meeting with Shell in Fort Lauderdale. Team president Wayne Huizenga and General Manager Rick Spielman also took part in the interview, said Jones, who declined further comment.

Bates declined to discuss his impending interview.

"Right now, I'm just enjoying this victory," he said. "It is a sweet win to beat the world champions."

Saban, who interviewed with Jones and Huizenga last Tuesday in Baton Rouge, La., said he hasn't talked to the Dolphins since. He said the timetable for a decision on the Miami job isn't his, but his preference would be to wait until after LSU plays Iowa in the Capital One Bowl at Orlando on Jan. 1.

"I personally would like to stay focused on what we're doing here," he said following practice Monday in Baton Rouge. "I would like to discuss the bowl game and I'd like to discuss our team. I'd like to discuss our players. They deserve that. They should be rewarded. Probably the thing that is the most distracting to me is that's not happening, and this seems to be the focus of attention, which is totally unfair to our team and our players."

There's widespread speculation the Dolphins will offer Saban the job this week. By talking with Shell, the NFL's senior vice president for football operations, Miami complied with a league requirement that teams interview a minority candidate for any coaching vacancy.

The Dolphins have said repeatedly during the search process that they planned to adhere to the requirement.



Dolphins interim coach Jim Bates celebrates Miami's victory over New England on Monday, the night before Bates' interview for the job.

Former New York Giants linebacker Harry Carson complained last week when Saban emerged as the front-runner before anyone else was interviewed. Carson said any subsequent minority candidate would likely be viewed as a courtesy interview.

Carson is with the Fritz Pollard Alliance, formed last year by a group of coaches, scouts and front-office personnel seeking to promote minority hiring in the NFL. He didn't return a call seeking comment Monday.

AP Sports Writer Mary Foster in New Orleans contributed to this report.

SPORTS

Stunning Fin-ish



Dolphins receiver Derrius Thompson (88) catches a 21-yard, game-winning touchdown pass with 1:23 left in the game as Patriots cornerback Troy Brown (80) defends on Monday. See story on Page 31.



Majerus apologizes to USC:
'Right now, i just can't
bring it,' Page 26



DALLAS MORNING NEWS/AP

Eagles receiver Terrell Owens is helped to the locker room after being injured early in the third quarter against Dallas on Sunday. Owens needs surgery on his ankle and will miss the rest of the regular season.

Owens out for playoffs

Injury to key weapon hurts Eagles' shot at Super Bowl

BY DAN GELSTON

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The parade is on hold. Those plane tickets to the Super Bowl are being double-checked to see if they're refundable.

Move over Boston. Quit cryin' Chicago. Want to talk about hexes and curses? Move to Philadelphia.

Terrell Owens, the playmaking, showboating and game-breaking wide receiver for the Eagles, is out for the rest of the regular season, the playoffs and probably the Super Bowl — if they get that far — with a sprained ankle.

TO has been TKO'd for the year, and suddenly fans and players in Minnesota, Green Bay and Atlanta are smiling.

The Philly faithful, meanwhile, are asking for a double. Yup, this was a two cheesesteak kind of a night.

"I think it's a devastating blow to the Eagles' chances," said fan Jamal Martin as he munched on finger foods at a downtown watering hole. "I don't know if they can recover."

Philly fans pessimistic? That's like asking if the sky is blue.

Though long-suffering Eagles

fans would never be so foolish to think a trip to the Super Bowl was a lock, even though their team is clearly the best in the NFC this season, it seemed this really would be their year.

The news hit the Eagles (13-1) on Monday like a sucker punch to the gut — Owens is likely finished and needs surgery, a crippling blow to a team that has lost three straight NFC title games.

"I was looking forward to the playoffs, really trying to get this team to the Super Bowl," Owens said. "I think without me, still, they achieve that goal."

"There's no reason for the city of Philadelphia to get down because I'm not there," he said. "Obviously, my presence will be missed, but we have the guys to get it done."

Perhaps, but it's going to get a whole lot harder without Owens.

The NFC East champion Eagles are left without their biggest offensive threat, their most animated player.

SEE OWENS ON PAGE 30

■ Arizona actually has shot to win NFC West, Page 29

■ Bad snap the good bad Vikings needed, Page 29

Deal sending Johnson to Yankees heads to Selig for approval Page 25